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# Disabled Women in El Salvador Reframing Themselves: A Case Study of the Women's Program of Acogipri

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**LA PALABRA COMO MEDIO DE LA COMUNICACION Y EDUCACION  
DE LA MUJER DISCAPACITADA**

**DISABLED WOMEN IN EL SALVADOR REFRAMING THEMSELVES:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM OF ACOGIPRI**

**A Master's Degree Project**

**by**

**Joan B. Cohen**

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## ABSTRACT

### LA PALABRA COMO MEDIO DE LA COMUNICACION Y EDUCACION DE LA MUJER DISCAPACITADA:

### DISABLED WOMEN IN EL SALVADOR REFRAMING THEMSELVES: THE CASE OF THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM OF ACOGIPRI

This paper is the study of a process, namely of how a group of disabled women begin to re-frame how they see themselves, and how along with this re-framing, re-define their possibilities in their community and their world.

The process was undertaken by the author and a group of disabled women in El Salvador who belonged to the Women's Program of ACOGIPRI in San Salvador. Using a family literacy model and alternative paradigm research as her basis for inquiry, the author examines how disabled women can effectively use, in their everyday lives, their knowledges, their articulations and their experiences as a base for new "literacies" that will allow for the re-defining of interactions or the creation of new interactions in their families and communities that can foster personal development and increase the possibility to effect change in their external world.

The research process took the form of interviews, a support group and eventually outreach into the community. This combination of activities helped these women, and the researcher, better understand how a group of people can meaningfully interact with existing "development programs", and when no program exists, develop meaningful alternatives that capitalize on the inherent strengths, wisdoms and insights of those struggling to be heard and seen.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Disability in El Salvador

There has been very little written about disability in Central America. Documentation tends to be of the statistical/census nature, listing numbers, gender, location and nature of disability. A comprehensive study of disabled women in El Salvador does not exist, although UNICEF has begun compiling data about the war disabled (both men and women) in the country. Smaller studies, conducted by private organizations such as FUNTER (Fundacion Teleton Pro-Rehabilitacion) have touched on the rehabilitation aspects of disability: special education for children, centers for the blind, always focusing on "this health problem"<sup>1</sup>, and ignoring the multiple ways disability affects other parts of an individual's life.

#### ACOGIPRI de R.L.<sup>2</sup>

In 1981, in the home of Eileen Giron, a group of approximately fifteen disabled people began to discuss ways of creating an income generating project run exclusively by the disabled. Without any formal tools of analysis for feasibility studies, the group began examining the different types of vocational training and skills available to the disabled population of San Salvador through educational and training opportunities. After lots of

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<sup>1</sup>Política Nacional de Atención Integral a las Personas con Discapacidades, (March, 1994). in Spanish it reads: "...a esta problemática de salud", page 8.

<sup>2</sup>ACOGIPRI de R.L. Asociación Cooperativa del Grupo Independiente Pro-Rehabilitación Integral de Responsabilidad Limitada. (The Cooperative Association of the Independent Group for Integrated Rehabilitation with Limited Responsibility).



inquiry and proposal writing, and with the help of different connections in San Salvador development circles, initial funding came from Catholic Relief Services to open two small workshops. One was a ceramics workshop and the other a sewing and tailoring workshop. Set up as a cooperative, these workshops were operated and managed exclusively by disabled individuals, a first in El Salvador. The sewing workshop functioned until 1984, and then closed, due to a plethora of tailor shops in San Salvador and a small profit margin.

The ceramics workshop, Shicali, one of three in El Salvador and the only cooperative that employed only disabled persons, continued to show a small profit margin. With funding from USAID, ACOGIPRI was able to purchase more equipment and move into a building that provided space for a bigger workshop and a salesroom.

With the motto, "nosotros tambien podemos" (we can also) ACOGIPRI is an excellent example of a grassroots development effort that employs its philosophy in all aspects of its business; as a legal cooperative ACOGIPRI has a monthly membership fee, a revolving loan program for members, on-going training and education for its membership and employees and is involved in advocacy for disabled persons and development efforts with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental programs in El Salvador and in the North.

In 1987, ACOGIPRI began a "Disabled Women's Program" <sup>3</sup> to address the issues of lack of education and training for women with disabilities. As a means to "discover"

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<sup>3</sup>"disabled women" or "women with disabilities" will be the terms used throughout this document. Discussed during our training sessions and the Summer Institute, these were the terms favored by the Salvadoran women with whom I did my research.

the hidden disabled women of San Salvador, ACOGIPRI began outreach into the community and began holding training sessions on self-esteem, literacy, gender issues, communication and community advocacy. Additionally, ACOGIPRI began to organize and host "Central American Training Programs for Disabled Women" for women from the region, and most recently (with funding from the Canadian Coalition on the Disabled), has begun sending women from El Salvador to neighboring countries to visit their programs and provide training for the development of other disabled women's groups mostly in Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras. ACOGIPRI's goal is to create permanent programs and networks to meet the various needs of disabled women in El Salvador and Central America.

Rather than using the deficit model for program development which most often focuses on rehabilitation, the Women's Program of ACOGIPRI chooses to draw on women's existing strengths and augments these inherent strengths with much needed educational and vocational training. The broader goal of the Women's Program at ACOGIPRI is to integrate the often marginalized woman with disability into both economic and social development programs in El Salvador.

I became informed of the activities of ACOGIPRI in 1993 when Eileen Giron, the founder and director, came to visit the Literacy Support Initiative (LSI) at the Center for International Education (CIE) to discuss the possibility of holding a "Summer Institute" for disabled women in San Salvador. Another graduate student at UMASS who is also a fellow [sic] Disabled People's International member with Eileen, informed her about LSI, and Eileen arranged to spend four days with us at CIE in the Spring of 1993 to learn

more about our literacy programs. That spring, I received funding from the Inter-American Foundation to try out my "Family Literacy Model" in Haiti, but political instability prevented me from returning to Haiti. That summer, while working in Costa Rica, I contacted Eileen and later went to El Salvador to discuss the possibility of research with the Women's Program at ACOGIPRI, slightly modifying my initial research model. In January of 1994 I went to El Salvador and stayed until August.

### Who is the Disabled Woman in El Salvador?

El Salvador, (*el pulgarcito de las Americas*), although the smallest country in Central America, is the most densely populated. With a population of five and a half million inhabitants, of these, almost one million have some sort of disability. According to the same statistics, 65% of these million are women. (CONAIPD, March, 1994).

After twelve years of war, El Salvador has moved into a more stable climate, conducive to broader economic and social development. After the first "democratic" elections, the new government released its official national policy on disabled persons in El Salvador; a study and list of recommendations for the handicapped: both children and adults. There are a series of government and non-governmental programs of education and training underway that have been set up to address issues of disability: especially in the areas of special education and rehabilitation. However, there is a marked tendency for the programs created for adults to serve war veterans and to serve only men. Most disabled women (including those who fought in the war) are not included in the majority of development efforts and most certainly, severely disabled women are rarely included

in the majority of development efforts. Additionally, in most development efforts for the disabled that exist in El Salvador at the present time, there is a pre-set agenda on the part of the funding agency, usually focusing on vocational skills. Using what I refer to as a "deficit model", these programs focus on the physical rehabilitation in areas where the disabled person is lacking (as assessed by the funders, governmental studies), rather than drawing on the strengths, interests and needs of program participants and their social realities.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RESEARCH PROCESS AS AN EXAMPLE OF ALTERNATIVE PARADIGM RESEARCH

My research design was developed in response to a set of broad headings and categories developed by the Inter-American Foundation. Slightly shifting the focus of the Inter-American Foundation which was interested in ways in which **grassroots development strategies can impact poor people**, my research model was designed to create a process of inquiry into the skills necessary so that "poor people" themselves can impact and meaningfully interact with grassroots development strategies. By focusing on disabled women in El Salvador, and examining their social reality, I hoped to prove that a collaborative process can be developed that would help these women learn the skills necessary to be protagonists in order to access, alter and/or create development programs in their immediate environment (community) that can potentially impact their lives.

The basis for this research design is my "family literacy model" or as I translated into Spanish an "integrated literacy model". I had developed this model while working with LSI and the Nepal family literacy Project, the Cambodian community and the Chapter 1 family literacy program at the Fort River School in Amherst and had been fine tuning it from my interactions with other family literacy programs in Holyoke and Springfield Massachusetts.

Appropriating From Participatory and Feminist Research  
and Feminist Thought

Although I am loathe to "label" what I do as a researcher as strictly participatory research or participatory action research or feminist research, I feel comfortable articulating that the tenets on which alternative paradigm research are based are most in line with my beliefs about why and how I should operate as a researcher. The alternative research paradigm is concerned with what is possible rather than what is (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:17) and clearly articulates a stance: research can be tied to the emancipation of people from oppressive structures. I believe, as do most researchers who subscribe to this alternative view of research, that all we do has a political nature and therefore cannot be neutral.

One alternative paradigm approach from which I appropriate tenets and methods is participatory research (PR). As I understand PR, it allows a way for me to "openly demonstrate solidarity with oppressed and disempowered people through our work as researchers." (Maguire, 1987, p.28) PR combines investigation, education and action; re-enforcing the bond between research and action and also challenging the dominant research paradigm's beliefs about the purpose of knowledge creation which for those who operate within the dominant research paradigm, focuses on merely interpreting social reality. In participatory research, the goal of knowledge creation is to change and alter social reality and this goal must be realized through a systematic change process where critical consciousness (for both the participants and the researcher); improvement of the lives of those involved in the process and finally, a transformation of societal structures

and relationships can take place.

Collective inquiry is another key element that draws me towards participatory research. In action research, collaborative data collection and collective inquiry with all interested organizations is desirable and sought out by the researchers, however, participatory research is more discriminating and abides by its political nature, since the participants are the owners and creators of the inquiry process.

Not all "interested" parties can participate in this collaborative process if it is not in the interest of mobilizing and educating the oppressed group. This can sometimes set up an adversarial and/or alienating relationship with some parties that may have a stake or interest in this collective inquiry for what the researchers see as the wrong reasons. However, because PR believes that there is a political stance tied to research, alienation is often seen as an unavoidable outcome, the only alternative to subverting the emancipatory nature of this kind of research.

The other piece of PR that is important for me is collective action. As I interpret PR, the goal is transformative collective action to effect social change. Not only is it hoped that personal transformations will occur, but also that an energy as a group will be created that leads to collective transformation. The act of "doing" participatory research itself can be seen as action and transformation, however, other types of action can and often do result as the group continues to reflect and analyze the larger structures of the problem. Becoming technically skilled or creating a technical intervention may be the beginning of the struggle to face the political structures that oppress.

And finally, the uses of the knowledge generated by this collective inquiry process is

also a key element of PR. As described by Peter Park,

...In the traditional social science research model, especially the "pure" type, knowledge that the researcher produces is deposited in the scientific storehouse from which, supposedly, policy makers, corporate executives, and other would-be social engineers draw requisite techniques for administering to, managing, and manipulating unwitting pacified populations. ...Participatory research restructures this relationship between knowing and doing and puts the people in charge of both the production and the utilization of knowledge (Park, 1989, pg.3).

Another place I have drawn from in order to shape and develop my alternative research methodology is some feminist research and some feminist theories. Most feminist researchers realize the importance of dialogue in order to tap into and validate women's knowledges and experiences. This is not new thinking, throughout the sixties and seventies small grassroots consciousness raising (CR) groups formed in order to give women a safe space to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences as women. From the well known slogan "the personal is political", we have come to understand the role that consciousness raising groups played in helping women re-examine what they thought to be individual problems, and in a group setting, begin to transform them into broader based social problems. By using dialogue to analyze and construct understanding and knowledge that would transform not only their own social reality, CR groups fomented political action for the purposes of liberation from existing oppressive structures.

More recently, western feminist theorists exploring knowledge creation such as Patti Lather, Carmen Luke, Jennifer Gore and women from the south such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Spivak and Maria Mies have begun carefully re-visiting the "master narratives" of social and critical theory and the interconnections between



feminisms, feminist and liberatory pedagogy, and a truly empowering and emancipatory feminist research paradigm. The assumption that they operate under is that by examining and understanding these "master narratives", we, as feminist researchers, become more free to pick and choose how we want to shape our own praxis and practice as researchers.

As Lather explained,

"my argument is in no way a collapsing of all these theoretical moments into some spurious synthesis. I cannot but believe that it is in both our parallels and our differences across the various feminisms, Marxisms, and poststructuralisms that we can begin to move forward towards a future that transcends our present limitations" (Lather, 1991, p.49).

and,

...critical inquiry is needed to empower the researched, build emancipatory theory and move toward the establishment of data credibility with-in praxis-oriented, advocacy research. ... My goal is to move research in many different, and indeed, contradictory directions in hope that more interesting and useful ways of knowing will emerge" (Lather, 1991. p.69).

Upon careful examination it becomes clear that many master narratives about liberation and emancipation are often constructed through a male model of patriarchy, liberation and power. However, by having the tools of analysis and critique which I have gained through my personal adaptation of feminisms, I can engage in informed and constructive critiques of works by people such as Derrida, Hegel, Lukacs, Lacan, Gramsci, Freire, Marx, Fanon, Foucault and Habermas, gleaning from these narratives what I feel is useful and insightful for my work as a researcher without feeling I need to

dismiss the entire discussion of these critical theorists.

Another useful "theory" for me is the socialist feminist **standpoint theory**.

Appropriating insights from Marx, Engels, Lukacs and others, standpoint theory "refers to a "position" in society which is shaped by and in turn helps shape the ways of knowing, structures of power and resource distribution" (Hennessy, 1993, p.67).

However, this does not mean that conceptualizing reality from the frame of women's lives, interests, activities and values makes us clearly see and understand the world.

Material forces, social positioning and the social construction of a person's role influence and play an important part in shaping our various ways of knowing. When approaching research from the viewpoint of liberation and empowerment of the most marginalized, it appears to me that we must take into consideration not only the positionality and location of our co-researchers but also their socially constructed view of women. For most disabled women, simply being a woman does not signify access nor alignment with the "feminist perspective" and its ways of viewing the world. All women's lives as reference points are not equal and by suggesting that we all operate from the same "standpoint" would be only fooling ourselves.

And finally, I will mention some key concepts<sup>4</sup> that I have taken from feminisms of Women of Color that will be used throughout my paper.

1. The concept of **voice**. In order to be able to allow for counter-hegemonic knowledges to exist, women must be able to name their own realities in an "authentic voice" (that is,

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<sup>4</sup>taken from Kane, Sherry, "Theoretical Foundations of Popular Education and Participatory Research", unpublished training design, Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Fall, 1993.

a "voice" which is rooted in their own experience, using their own form of expression, way of conveying ideas, etc.) and to have the naming of those realities considered as valid. Since knowledge is constructed, it is important to allow different groups of women to "speak for" themselves to create their own knowledge.

2. The idea of **contextuality**. Counter to the idea of a universal concept of "Truth", knowledge about and an understanding of the world are culturally and historically specific. This idea is important in the area of development since a "successful" model of a project which has been created in one place can not necessarily be re-created in another cultural context.

3. **The multiplicities of social identities**. Your identity - your gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, urban versus rural, etc. - affects how you interpret the world. This nullifies the idea of a universal "We" since the understanding of the multiplicities of identity does not allow for singular ideas of what women's oppression or disability oppression [author's addition] looks like across race, class, and nationality lines.

### Family Literacy Model

Family literacy, as I have come to believe, does not refer to the act of an adult reading a book to a young child, nor the way a GED class incorporates into a lesson the teaching of parenting skills to a group of teen mothers. These two things may be outcomes of a family literacy intervention, however, in of themselves, they are not what family literacy is all about. In my understanding of family literacy, the goal and objective should be to situate the understanding and interaction of any "literacy activity"

in the known environment and everyday life of the learner. Family literacy is a perspective and a process that helps us better understand learning and meaning making and is not about pre-set literacy solutions, such as pre-made lesson plans or reading certain children's books.

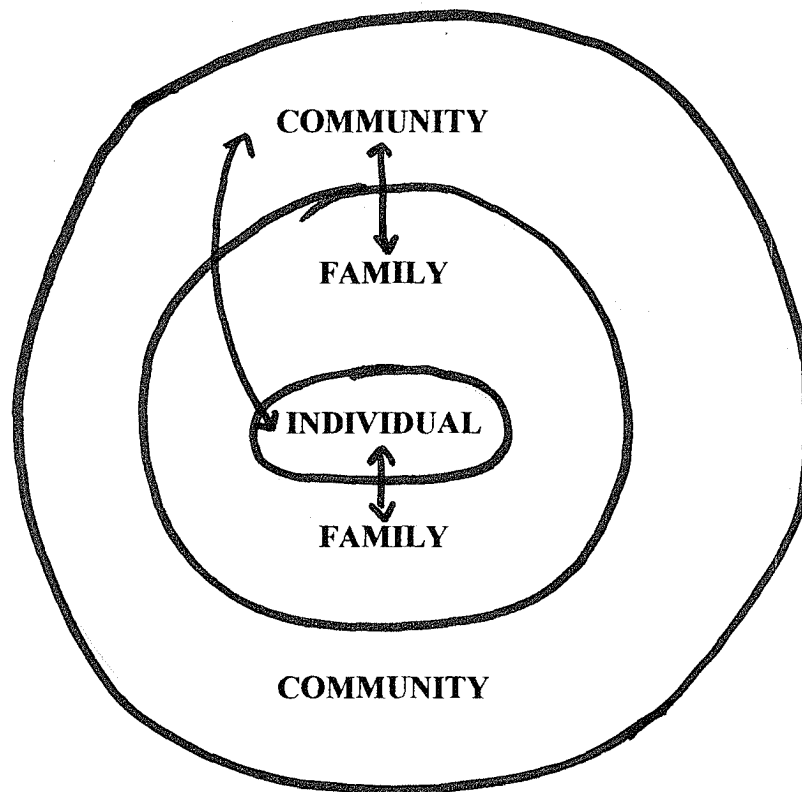
The diagram below illustrates the family literacy model I created, beginning with the examination of the individual and the family, moving into the community and the world. I, like feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith, believe that the sociological subject must be relocated "...as actual individuals located in the everyday world" (Smith, 1987, p.98), therefore, I stress normal interactions rather than specific "literacy events" (Heath, 1983, p.386) that focus on reading and writing.

The unique part of this model or process, is the fresh way it is used as a tool for analysis. Unlike many family literacy models that focus their pre-set literacy intervention by examining the big picture of interactions only between the individual and his/her external community and looking for "what is missing", this tool relies on the examination of all the complexities of the interactive process among the individual and his/her family members, the family and the community and the individual and the community. Because my model focuses on improving the interactive process or creating one where none exists, the ramifications of this kind of inquiry process do not produce a pre-set intervention but a process that allows for greater possibility for interactive intervention that make sense for that individual in his or her world.

Outcomes may well include a lesson on parenting for mothers, however, the process of how that lesson is decided, who decides the content, how the content is

explored and presented, whose culture's perspective is used to describe appropriate parenting, etc. are all determinates of the inquiry process that depend on interactions between individuals, their family members and their community, and are not dependent on a pre-set idea of what parenting is to a certain group of people.

### **FAMILY LITERACY MODEL**



**Interactions being examined  
in everyday life through:**

**Language  
Voice  
Communication  
Relationships**

Because of my alternative view and use of some common terms in this model, I will define the terms as they were used during the research process.

**Community** - often refers to all persons living in a particular locality, however, for purposes of this study, community was defined by the participants. It could be as broad as San Salvador, as small as a neighborhood, or in some cases, referred to the only association or group the participant knew with the exception of their family.

**Family** - often, in the North, family is imagined in the "nuclear" sense. In El Salvador, family is seen as extended, often including unrelated "relatives". Also, because of war and migration, physical proximity was not seen as a determinate of family with the group with whom I worked.

**Language and communication** - language often refers to a system of communication between persons in speech or writing. In the Women's Program, language was used in a much broader sense, often overlapping with **communication**. Because women possessed different abilities, language was comprised of things as small as a glance and as large as the way a woman moved through space in her wheel chair.

**Voice**- as described earlier, my use of voice refers to the "authentic voice" rooted in women's own experience, using their own form of expression, way of conveying ideas, that allows women to name their own reality, and have it considered valid. Again, working with women who possessed a variety of skills, the understanding and validating of voice was critical.

**Relationships-** referring to whom and how people engaged with in their world.

Additionally, this included examining these relationships and the interplay of power, control and knowledge that existed.

### The Role of Literacy and the Ability for Disabled Women to Reframe Themselves

Literacy is not only defined as a condition where someone "has it" and is literate or doesn't "have it" and is illiterate. Literacy is a dynamic entity situated within the social and power dynamics of a society and is much broader than just the skills of reading and writing. As defined by Paulo Freire, literacy involves a "re-framing" of one's reality through conscientization.

To acquire literacy is more than to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing techniques. It is to dominate those techniques on terms of consciousness; to understand what one reads and to write what one understands; it is to communicate graphically. Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words or syllables-lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe-but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context. (Freire, 1973, p.48)

However, it is not as easy as saying "I think I will reframe myself in the eyes of society today". Also of concern are the theoretical and ideological basis of literacy and the acquiring of literacy skills. On the broader level of literacies as knowledge, it is important to examine what the nature of knowledge, learners (or knowers) is in society, and how life experiences of these knowers is socially constructed in relation to both

power and social control in the society. Most positivistic theories of knowledge which tend to focus on rationality, see the nature and knowledge of people as separate entities from his/her life experiences, actions, and social context. From this kind of theorizing comes the belief that there are standards and norms of knowledge that must be acquired based on scientific "rational" norms rather than individuals living life and gaining experiences. In her book, "the Everyday as Problematic", (Smith,1987) Dorothy Smith argues that dominant social science and what is believed to be knowledge cannot be separated from real people and their perspectives based on their geographical, historical location of their real lives. The problematic of positivist knowledge is that the "norms" of what is considered valid knowledge is not based on **all** real people and **all** their specific lives, but are based on those who are situated in the location of power and control.

As Michel Foucault (1980) pointed out, in knowledge itself are relations of power and control. This power does not only exist between those who know (the knowers) and those who don't, but are further embedded in the conditions that make that possible. Knowledge cannot be separated from the social, political, cultural or economic conditions of society. The way society maintains this knowledge of the dominant interests is through its institutions; the places where these norms of society are reproduced in order to continue domination.

A critical approach to literacy attempts to counter this domination, develop active forms of resistance and re-frame this positivistic knowledge production. In the western world, this discourse of critical literacy is most closely associated with Paulo Freire.



Seeing literacy as a political act, Freire requires people to "theorize" about their everyday world "reading the world" as he calls it as well as reading the "word". (Freire, 1973) The ultimate goal of this kind of literacy is empowerment and social transformation.

Central to a critical approach to literacy is the belief that literacy and language supply us with the basic skills and tools to challenge the dominant structures.

Knowledge creation based on a community's various ways of knowing, common forms of speech/language and thought are all integral to the ability to comprehend, critique, intervene and struggle with control of our social world. Such a perspective of literacy requires a creative practice which can be personally and socially meaningful and empowering to participants. In theory, the content and orientation of this practice are directed toward challenging the power relations of what is traditionally accepted and valued as knowledge. In practice, it should relate to the context of the learners' lives, be interesting, purposeful, and engaging, incite dialogue and struggle around meanings, interpretations and identities and promote a critical understanding of the participants relationship to broader society, and of their own as well as society's political nature, and transformative possibilities. (Walsh, 1991, p.17)

A critical approach has the potentiality for generating social knowledge forms which can challenge the categories through which the individuals perceive, understand and evaluate social reality (Bennett & Pedraza, 1984). Patti Lather refers to this as an emancipatory knowledge which increases the awareness of the contradictions hidden or distorted by everyday understandings and... directs attention to the possibility to social transformation inherent in the present configuration of social processes (Lather, 1986, p.259).

A critical approach allows for the possibility to re-frame not only our own

experiences but also to re-frame and theorize about the ways others see the world. The possibility also exists for participants to gain an understanding of how race, class, gender, ability and disability, all play into this understanding of the interplay of power relationships. A critical approach to literacy can also illuminate the role that oral and written literacies can have in helping participants express their understandings of their world. Giroux sees literacy as

"...inherently a political project in which men and women assert their rights and responsibility to read, understand and transform their own experiences, but also to reconstitute their relationship within the wider society. In this sense, literacy is fundamental to aggressively constructing one's voice as part of a wider project of possibility and empowerment" (1988, p.64).

By linking literacy to knowledge and power, a critical approach aims to emancipate individuals so that they can participate in "the unveiling of reality" (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p.66).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

Below I describe the research model I used as it was shaped by the disabled women I was working with at ACOGIPRI. My original research design was very close to the design below, however, while moving through the process, real life and the reality of doing research altered a few parts of the original research model.

#### **Component I - Interviews and Visits**

Before I could begin with interviews, it was necessary to build an environment of trust and confidence with the women I would be inviting to spend the next five months working on a collaborative research effort. Without the "formal" connection to ACOGIPRI, this type of inquiry activity would never have been possible. My constant presence at ACOGIPRI was critical to being accepted into the lives of the people I would spend the next seven and a half months with. Since people were constantly streaming in and out of the office and the ceramics workshop, my being there and being able to engage in spontaneous conversation was important for the women in order to sound me out and decide for themselves whether I was someone they felt comfortable enough inviting into their lives or not.

To formally begin the project, Eileen invited all women who had, at one time or another, been connected to The Women's Program at ACOGIPRI to an informal meeting where we would all become acquainted and I would have an opportunity to inform the

women about what exactly I was proposing to do during my stay in El Salvador. At this initial meeting, I extended invitations to anyone who would be interested in talking with me, adding that a commitment of four to five months (a few times a month) would be preferable after the initial stage of interviews and home visits. The follow-up commitment was critical to the joint building of a research piece onto the Women's Program at ACOGIPRI both Eileen and I had envisioned.

After the initial meeting, I began the home visit/interviewing process, setting up appointments with all those interested in participating in the process with me. I started with very open-ended interviews and informal home visits, trying to find answers to the following research questions that would help me understand a bit more about the disabled women in El Salvador:

- \* How are the basic family/household unit and its variations defined in the socio-cultural context?
- \* How do disabled women in Salvador understand the inter-relationship between their social context and the literate and/or abled environment in which they operate?
- \* What tasks are these Salvadoran women required to negotiate in their daily lives that require literacy?<sup>5</sup>

The following is the list of interview questions that lead us into an in-depth discussion:

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<sup>5</sup> Here and in other places of my discussion, literate and literacy are used in very broad terms. Torruellas, Benmayor, Goris and Juarbe in their piece "Affirming Cultural Citizenship in the Puerto Rican Community: Critical Literacy and El Barrio Popular Education Program" in Literacy as Praxis: Culture, Language and Pedagogy (1991) ed. Catherine E. Walsh, come the closest to the way I use literacy here. They advocate "A broader conception of literacy as popular education, developed within the Latin American context, offers a viable paradigm for innovative educational practices... Within this framework, illiteracy is recognized not as the cause, but the manifestation of the systematic exclusion of minorities and the poor from economic, political and educational opportunities. Hence, learning how to read and write becomes a vehicle for developing collective solutions that address the underlying conditions of inequality. Literacy moves beyond decoding printed symbols to developing critical thinking skills. (pg. 184)

- \* What problems do you face daily as a disabled women?
  - \* What kind of support from your family members have you received in order to overcome obstacles presented to you? This question was later changed to:
  - \* do your family members support you in order to overcome obstacles presented to you?
- (After a few interviews, it was obvious that not all women received support in the positive sense but felt obliged to answer that they did because of the way the question was asked).
- \* What problems do you think exist for disabled women in El Salvador?
  - \* Do you think that disabled men and women face similar problems in Salvadoran society?
  - \* Why do these problems you mentioned exist?
  - \* What causes these problems?
  - \* What can be done to change these problems?
  - \* Can a group like ACOGIPRI help work to solve these problems?
  - \* Would you be interested in participating in a group that discussed and examined these problems?

Although not in the original design, it was soon obvious after a few interviews that the first question had to be a lead in for the women to describe her "disability" and then explain her life in relation to it. By responding to this question first, all the women explained what had gone "right" for her in her life as well as some of the broader problems she felt were facing her. Although when directly asked the questions about problems and possible causes of the problems facing disabled women in El Salvador,

some women could not answer, the beginning narrative about her life and disability helped me find the answers and opinions and were easily picked out while transcribing.

These interviews/home visits are of varying length. Some women were initially interviewed for two hours and then additionally interviewed during a follow-up lasting anywhere between one and three hours. Other women were harder to interview on tape (frequent stops and requests to turn off the tape recorder) although more time was probably spent with them in an informal talking setting.

Ann Oakley in her article, "Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms"<sup>6</sup>, suggested that a feminist interviewer will often have trouble "justifying" her interviews if they are compared to and critiqued by the traditional interview paradigm created by predominately male sociologists using a male framework of what the purposes of an interview should be. She summarizes the traditional paradigm interviewing literature as valuing (1) that the interviewing process be a one way process in which the interviewer elicits and receives, but never gives information; (2) the importance of adopting an attitude towards interviewees which views him/her as an objectified function of data; and (3) interviews are seen as having no personal meaning in terms of social interaction, thus negating anything except the statistics and data gathered through the interviewing process.

Oakley goes on to suggest that all of these traditional paradigms of interviewing is problematic for the feminist interviewer whose primary orientation and stance is towards the validation of women's subjective experiences as women, people and knowers

<sup>6</sup>in Doing Feminist Research (1981) Helen Roberts, editor.

[authors addition]. I found this all to be true as I fumbled with my tape recorder, and wondered if this "chatting" would "count", or worried that I needed to be trying to set a more formal mode for this interviewing business. However, upon returning home and listening to the tapes and reconstructing the conversations, I realized that this informal chatting and reciprocal conversation style was exactly where the interesting and essential concepts were forming and that these ideas would later play key roles in our group research.

For me, the practice of interviewing with this group of women made me realize not only the need to push the validation of alternative qualitative research, but also the need to "re-think" the techniques and strategies with which we do our alternative work/research. I found that once I could let go of the male model of interviewing that I had in my head, it was easier for me to trust my intuition and just go with what felt appropriate and right. The other part of this interviewing I found to be imperative was the notion of operating from the subjective: operating on the assumption that these women were "the" knowers and "the" creators of intimate knowledge about disabled women in El Salvador and that only they could inform me. This assumption freed me from the constraints placed on the interviewer conducting interviews operating within the dominant interview paradigm.

After every interview, and/or visit, I would return home or to the office to listen and transcribe (in Spanish) the interview process. This process took between 8-12 hours per interview. It was often necessary for me to re-construct conversations that were incomplete and examine it in context of a previous thought or theme we were discussing

in order to make sense of the text. Because I knew I would need to re-examine these interviews again as I began my writing, I made copious notes about the setting, the time of day, any literacy artifacts or any other contextual clues I thought would later help me to better understand exactly what was going on. Additionally, upon returning to Amherst, I would also need to translate my Spanish transcriptions into English for the writing up of the research.

After about seven weeks, I had interviewed ten women in the greater San Salvador area. All of them except one had a pre-established relationship with ACOGIPRI which made an enormous difference in terms of trust, confidence and the ability to conduct the kind of investigation I was hoping for.

At this stage of the project I also began to visit other disabled people's organizations (mostly rehabilitation centers), women's groups, feminist organizations and other government and nongovernment groups that might have insights for me to better understand the location of disabled women in Salvadoran society. I also visited special education programs to have a look at what some of the women I was working with had experienced during their childhood. Additionally, I started accompanying my friends on their "trips" into the outside world: the world of having to figure out a way to step up into a bus, how to get across the street, how to communicate with the outside world if you are a deaf, how to convince someone on the street to lift up your wheelchair into a taxi, or how to ignore the odd glances and more often disbelieving stares received as they entered into public life. Although these were not specifically my personal issues, the frustration I felt at not being able to solve a problem, create a solution or have the entire society listen



to an educational talk became my issue.

### Component II - Information Gathering and Analysis

Before we could meet as a group to examine mutual issues and decide what kinds of "actions" we would or could take, I had to analyze the interviews, transcripts, discussions and observations that I had been gathering during this time. I listened and looked for answers to the research questions listed above so that I would better understand the context of disabled women in El Salvador. At the same time, I listened to the tapes and transcripts in the hopes of gleaning out key concepts, generative themes, issues/problems as well as what these women believed to be the roots and causes of the various kinds of "problems" these women felt and were experiencing through their daily interactions within their families and also with the broader Salvadoran society.

Having transcribed the interviews made it easier for me in the sense that I could visually pluck out words and/or generative themes that were continually coming up in discussions with these ten women. From this list of generative words and themes, I used a process based on problem posing, problematizing and analysis. During the first step, I presented the generative themes I had gleaned out of my interviews and observations, (presenting them as small sections of direct quotes) on flip charts and small pieces of cardboard and for those who were not able to read, verbally reading them. Then, the group did small group activities to analyze and examine these statements. At this point small groups were given guiding questions:

- \* What ideas, themes or learning did you pick up from these quotes?

\* Are there other issues you feel need to be discussed that are not presented here?

Secondly, over a longer period of time, we used problem posing and problematizing to examine some of the generative themes as they arose in the context of the meetings. Although meetings did not focus specifically on any one generative theme, as we moved through the family literacy model, which began with the individual, moved to the family and then worked out into the community and beyond, if an issue arose, I relied on training techniques that helped focus our energies towards a critical analysis of that issue and how it impacted upon their realities as disabled women in El Salvador.

This group approach to analysis was important for me in order to help the women see that I was not there to be the "gringa expert" and that I considered their experiences of "living" as disabled women in El Salvador made **them** the knowers and the experts. Also, by beginning with the individual and moving out towards the family and community, I thought it would help the group be better able to identify the structural causes and systemic problems they encountered in their everyday lives. And finally, it was important that the group steer the discussions in directions that they needed to. For that reason, I only planned an outline of a session after we as a group had discussed our direction. I felt that if I had began each group with the pronouncement that we were going to discuss a collective "problem" that the group had named, it would have been my issue and the group would never have taken ownership as a group.

Personally, I was a bit nervous about my own "location" as an abled bodied, gringa, academic from "los estados" doing research. What I hoped to represent and embody was a safe person who could help them organize and structure their thoughts,

opinions, questions and doubts in a way that could productively facilitate meaningful analysis, discussion, group building and the desire to become change agents and create action. I wanted to share the tools and skills of information gathering, documentation, organization and analysis that they had never had the opportunity to gain, and finally, to help them see that not only could this "research" process be interesting, that they were all capable of doing it.

### Component III - Moving into Action

Action took place on a number of different levels. The first tier of action was the decision to take "action" in the form of finding other disabled women outside of San Salvador. The second tier of action was the decision to hold group meetings focusing on skill building so that this group of women could go out and find other disabled women and help them analyze their own social realities about being disabled in El Salvador. Another "action" that happened was that many group members, who had never written before, submitted poems, life stories and/or dictated things for the "boletina" (bulletin) that the ACOGIPRI staff published. And finally, the group members mentioned wanting a space to discuss their problems and concerns in a safe environment with only women.

We (ACOGIPRI staff and I) were also operating under the assumption that the Women's Program of ACOGIPRI would be hosting (if we received sufficient funding) a Summer Institute for Women with Disabilities from the entire Central American region; thus interested women could act as co-facilitators and play a key role in the organization and implementation of this event, and lastly, that together, ACOGIPRI staff and I could



identify potential facilitators and leaders for the future of the organization. Also identified was the need to educate not only other disabled women but to educate the entire able bodied community about the issues important to disabled women (and men) in El Salvador.

### **Generative Themes: Problems Faced in Every Day Life: The Reality of Disability in El Salvador**

The following is a list of generative themes identified by the 10 women I interviewed. They are mentioned in order of frequency as they were named by the women.

- \* Architectural obstacles;
- \* Transportation problems;
- \* Lack of support from family and/or community;
- \* Misconception of disabled women and their abilities;
- \* Lack of educational facilities and/or opportunities;
- \* Lack of acceptance in educational settings by peers and teachers;
- \* Low self-esteem;
- \* Inability to find a love relationship;
- \* The importance of fulfilling the traditional role of mother and/or wife and/or caregiver;
- \* Lack of work opportunities for the disabled.

I will illustrate each of these generative themes with quotes from the women themselves. These quotes are sometimes anonymous and sometimes not, depending on

the instructions of the interviewee.

**\* Architectural obstacles:**

...it was too far to walk to school, it was a very hilly place, and of course, there were no buses. So I used a horse, that was my means of transportation. They would out me on in the morning and my sister would carry my notebooks, and my dad, who was a teacher, would lift me off when I got to school. This was fine until the war, then there were barricades and mines in the roads, we couldn't go to school.

There aren't many places to go shopping. At Metro-Centro (big shopping mall in San Salvador) for example, there are some ramps and things but I can't fit through the doors to the stores (in my wheelchair). They don't really think about us.

**\* Transportational obstacles:**

*Puchika!* [explicative in Spanish] Sometimes, I wait in the center (of San Salvador) for hours trying to get back to Soyapango. There is no way to get into a bus, and anyway, what mostly goes are vans anyway. But people don't want to have to deal with helping me up and then dealing with my seat (wheel chair). By now, I know who will be willing to help me, but if I need to go anywhere during the rush hours, forget it!

Ay! To get from Santa Tecla to San Salvador, in the morning! Firstly, I can't do it alone, because I change buses at the Hospital Rosales. Someone has to help me get through those awful hordes, and carry anything I need for the day, and there I am trying to stand up with my crutches, worrying that someone will push me.

**\* Lack of acceptance in educational settings by peers and teachers**

The second semester of university I was taking an accounting class. Towards the end of the class, the professor came near me and said, "are you taking this class?" and I answered that I was. He then said, "I don't think you will pass. I don't know why people like you

study, you'd be better off staying at home. Because here (in this lecture hall) the student's benches are very high and this class is very hard, I don't think you will pass". But I ignored him. Then, one time, during the fourth or sixth class, the professor called on me to go do an exercise on the blackboard. And he knew I couldn't (physically). So I stood up and said that I could walk down to the last row of chairs, but since the stage on which he lectures was so high, I couldn't climb up to it. And he said to me that if I was in university, it was expected that I could do the work, and if not, why were you here. And I said, I can do the work, what I can't do is get up the stairs. But if I dictate all the answers to you to write down or to another student to write down for me, and he said, "no, what I want is for you to come up front." and I said, "truthfully, I can't". And then he said, "within two weeks is our first exam, And I don't think you will pass." In front of the entire lecture hall. And this was the second or third time he had said things like that to me.

During the war, we were displaced and went to Soyapango. My mother put me in high school, but the vice-principal didn't believe I had finished grade school. We waited a month, because of the war, to get my certificates to show (that I had graduated). And finally one day at 8 in the morning, I went to school. And all the students stared at me and said that maybe the woman (my mother) had made a mistake and meant to bring me to a health clinic rather than to high school or perhaps I belonged in fifth grade or first grade or something like that. But certainly not for high school, and they would laugh.

**\* Lack of support from family and/or community**

Because at the beginning I lost the ability to speak and also my memory, I had to begin with the syllables like little children learn the a,b,c . I couldn't understand, for example if a clown was a clown, because I didn't know the word. So, they left it to my brother to teach me how to speak again. He was a very strict professor and I was so delicate and frail (emotionally) and I just couldn't learn that way. And

instead of telling him, I would just start to cry, he couldn't be of much help during that stage of my recovery.

Ruth goes on to explain,

Sometimes I felt rejection from my older sister, instead of helping me, she would put up obstacles to my ideas when I mentioned studying, working. And she made me angry because she said, "Ruth, how are you going to go out [of the house] after being so coquettish [before the stroke] in your high heels and nylons." Because I was very coquettish when I left the house to go to work. But now, I had to wear orthopedic shoes. And she would say, 'Ah, no, what are your friends going to say. They will pretend they don't know you.

**\* Misconception of disabled women and their abilities**

In Cecelia's case,

after high school, there was no more talk of school or work. They (family members) told me it was better to stay home. But I always wanted to be an architect." (She then proceeded to show me drawings from her sixth grade mechanical drawing class).

The *licenciada* (someone who holds a university degree) where I was working told me that I could no longer do my job and she let me go. I still give injections to people who need them, so its obvious I can still do it.

**\* Lack of educational facilities and/or opportunities**

They told my sister that it is illegal for anyone with any type of disability to enroll in the faculty of medicine; but you must just have patience and thank God. Right now I am trying to get documents together and present a case for a Human Rights abuse.

This is the first time anyone has ever talked to me about "this stuff". Usually they want us to learn a new skill or try



to make us do something we don't need. You are letting us talk about what we think is important.

**\* Low self-esteem**

I would really like to learn to use a sewing machine. But, I don't have a sewing machine, and really to go to an academy for sewing and confection, I couldn't do that, because I would have to leave the house, but really, its my family, they over-protect me and I just couldn't do it anyway.

I didn't want to go to any more meetings. They talk a lot and then it would be my turn to talk, and I didn't want to talk in front of the group because all I wanted was to be like before (my stroke) and I could feel a lump in my throat...

**\* Inability to find a love relationship**

I don't think I will marry, never. If I had a boyfriend, yes, perhaps I could marry, but since I don't have a boyfriend. I would like to have children but since I can't... It's because I am so serious, that's what they tell me. ...Since I never go anywhere, then, of course I don't have a boyfriend.

Now as an adult, I often feel like that people don't accept me, that they reject me. I have gone out on dates, maybe because they feel bad for me, they feel like it would be nice, but then I never get a call back. I've been told that I am pretty but no one ever approaches me.

**\* The importance of fulfilling the role of caregiver, wife and mother**

I can cook, iron, wash, all the things I need to do. I have the right to love and all of that, we all have that right to love and be loved. We, the disabled, have to educate the rest of the population to understand that we can and have the right to love, because now, if I said, that I was in love, they would ask, "who would want to be with you? "

I talk to some (girl) friends I have, and we all think alike. That we will get married and have children, have a house

to take care of, we are all in that age when you begin to do all that.

**\* Lack of work opportunities**

FUNTER (a Salvadoran NGO that focuses on rehabilitation) always calls to say that there is a job opening and they want to hire a disabled person. But when I go to these, they then say that we don't have the right skills. If we are never given a chance how are we going to get these skills?

I went for an interview once. What they wanted me to do didn't seem that complicated, but, when I went and they saw me limp, they told me I wouldn't be able to do it.

Regardless of their age, educational and socio-economic background, all of the women I interviewed faced most of the problems named above. The hardest part for these women seemed to be the ability to name the causes of these problems or why the problems they identified exist. When I asked the two questions in the first interview, "why do you think these problems you mentioned exist?" and "what causes these problems?" Most of the women said "I don't know" or often blamed that common "they", meaning society in general. Because so many of the people they know and loved fit into this "they" who really didn't understand them, many women would frequently add, "it's our culture and traditions, and it's not so-and-sos fault", as the causes of the problems mentioned by them. In the ten interviews, only one women began to extrapolate towards a systemic analysis of the problems and causes, focusing on relationships of problems faced by the collective group of "disabled women" and their relationship to the bigger structural problems of the society.

the question is our society. Not because we have a disability, for me it isn't that. The problem is to be able to learn more about the problem. Its the same thing with the economic factor, which is really principle. The role I must play is as a helper and a voice, because I have studied and understand the importance of changing the system.

This same woman analyzed her getting polio at age 3 as being a result of a structural problem of the government that resulted in poor health care in the country not only as the individual problem of not being vaccinated.

And how I lived in Morazan, its more remote there. My mother would always take me to get the vaccine, and they would tell me I was sick and to come back. Let's wait until the next time, and the next time I had something else, and so on. And to me, that was a factor, how can I say, bad health care in our country.

Culture was also to blame for why society marginalized women with disability even more than it marginalized women. All ten women agreed that in their society women were **already** marginalized for the simple fact of being female, and so as women with disability, they were doubly marginalized (six women used this term) and things were much more difficult for them than for men with disabilities.

When asked the question, "What can be done to change these problems?", most women replied that a place like ACOGIPRI was necessary, but made no mention of the activities that they felt were necessary for a place like ACOGIPRI to offer to disabled women.

For the question, "What kind of support or lack of it have you received from your family members in order to overcome obstacles presented to you?" there were various

opinions.

...my family never stopped me from doing anything. The only thing was if I had continued to go to school, I would have returned very late at night. And, well, I was alone, so... I never worked outside the house. I've always stayed at home with my mommy and my dad. After high school, I looked for work, but they didn't give it to me. Now, the only time I leave the house is with my family. I'm afraid, I might fall.

Some responses, such as the comment above from Cecilia, had a sort of double message, almost as though she and other women were repeating what they had been hearing from their family members. Other women could easily identify how and what kinds of support they received or didn't from their family members,

Practically, I had a lot of moral support from my mom most of all and physical support also because wherever I wanted to go she would accompany me. It wasn't the same with my brothers nor with my dad. Because inside, my dad felt bad, and sad because he would say, "ahh.. poor thing my daughter when are you going to walk like before?" And I would begin to feel very bad for myself. But now I say to him, "daddy, it is done and now you just have to get used to how I am. I am happy how I am. And look, for me, walking differently from other people isn't an obstacle...And don't look at me with that look of poor thing, my girl."

### Disabled Women and the Family

All the women I interviewed spent the beginning part of the interview talking about their families. Research has continually shown that families act as the first teachers and the first school for most people. This is just as true for the disabled women I interviewed. Not only were family members responsible for educating disabled

women, often when the disability occurred later in life, family members are responsible for rehabilitation as well. Moreover, family members are the ones that seem to most often influence the disabled women's sense of self and her capacity to do things; study, travel, leave the house, go out into the world, work, etc.

Family members decide (directly or indirectly) what is possible for the disabled women especially when she is a young girl, choosing the path of the abled: school, work, home responsibilities, civic responsibilities or the path of a "dis" abled person, fit only to stay home, learn to perform the more critical and important tasks of the house: clean, wash clothes, cook, make tortillas, etc. This way at least the disabled women might have a normal life if she could be seen as "marryable". Unfortunately for the disabled woman, the messages that accompany these two distinct paths are the powerful forces that will either help her become "literate", about her world and her possibilities, or will keep her illiterate about her world, more within the image of the "dis" abled person. Angelica explains,

From my point of view, I don't have any disability. Everyone else says I have a disability, but for me it isn't that. I can study, do everything, I can cook, iron, wash, do my things. But, more slowly than other persons. I need to have help to go here, there and sometimes, I get frustrated, but I never say I can't do it. They say I am disabled because I use crutches, but for me, I'm not. It's not **my** [emphasis Angelica's] disability.

However, Cecilia tells a somewhat different story,

I wanted to travel. To go somewhere far away, like Santa Ana (two hours from San Salvador) alone, different places. But I can't. Firstly, they don't let me. Because they say it is very dangerous to travel alone. And I might fall.  
So, I can't.

Cecilia, also talked about wanting a college education to be an architect or engineer, or a small business at home, or even to climb the hill near her sister's house, but she ended every wish with a "pero entonces, no puedo", "however, I can't."

When a disabled women continually hears that she **can't**, isn't **capable**, is not **equal** these words, of course, affect the way she sees herself. As time goes on, these are not only the words she hears, these are the words she herself uses, and speaks, or if not, they are the words that she has internalized to define herself, her abilities and her overwhelming "disabilities". Just as Freire describes in Pedagogy of the Oppressed,

"The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility"  
(Freire, 1992, p.31).

Many families are not intentionally discriminating against one of their own. They too, hear from their peers and the outside world about what disabled people can and cannot do. They are just trying to do what they believe is the best for their disabled family member. Often, they feel that less discrimination will take place if the disabled women stays at home among family members. At home, the family can protect her from the mean comments, the odd stares and the unfair treatment they will receive from the outside, "abled" world.

my mother was more traumatized than I when I left the hospital. As I told you, I really didn't have any hair when I left the hospital. And she gave me a hat to wear when I left the hospital. But when I couldn't stand the heat, I would just take it off. And since there are always people who are jerks, they would say things like "hey, baldy,

baldy", things like that... My mother would get upset and get into fights defending me, as I said, she was more traumatized than I was, to the point where she didn't want me to go out alone, so afraid of what the people would say.

At home, the family members can control to some degree what kind of influence the outside world has on their beloved family member whereas venturing out into the world it is harder to protect her. Explains a friend who works at ACOGIPRI;

We both won a place at the **Very Special Arts Festival** in Brussels. We were the only two from El Salvador or Central America chosen. I won a prize for a poem I wrote and she won for a painting. I did everything I could think of to get us plane tickets for Brussels. All we needed was the airfare, everything else was covered. When I called up her parents to tell them that I was busy trying to find a way for us to go in June they said to me, "it doesn't matter if you do find the tickets. Mary won't be going with you. There is no way we can let her go to a far away place just like that. Who knows what could happen."

On the other hand, it is often a family member who makes it possible for the disabled women to pursue her dreams.

My mommy went everywhere with me. She would get on the bus with me, help me into the taxi, take me to school, take me to ACOGIPRI, wait for me. everything. She was my mental and physical support. When I didn't want to go to any more meetings at ACOGIPRI, she would talk me into going.

My family always helped me. My mommy used to pay little girls to play with me. what she would do was to say to other women who also made tortillas and tamales, "lend me your daughter and I will give you a quantity of money so that they will play." And the girl happy and we would play, making tortillas, tamales of corn (tamales de elote), houses. And later, she would ask to play with me, and I would ask to play with her. Then later when I started

school, my mommy said, "look, lend me your daughter and I will pay for her studies." And she would go and to study with me. and so my mom would pay for the schooling of her, my studies and we would study together. And it was like this until high school.



## CHAPTER IV

### ACTION + REFLECTION = PRAXIS

The next section describes in greater detail, Components II and III of the project: analysis and problematization, examining the broader structures of disabled women's lives, information collecting, and finally, action.

Of course, these events did not fall into neat little categories nor a sequential order. Because these activities rarely occurred in isolation and were often times jumbled together, I will discuss them that way. For each meeting or set of meetings, themes are described, as well as group participants participation, decision making, leadership styles and any action-taking.

By the middle of February, the ten women I had interviewed were eager to meet as a group. Without discussing any themes as a group, most had mentioned that they saw the role of a support group being to share and solve problems, and also do community outreach to identify and incorporate other disabled women not only in the capital but also in the countryside of El Salvador.

#### Getting Acquainted

##### **Meeting One - *Conociendonos***

The first meeting began with excitement on both my part and the women. Not only did the ten women I invited attend, but there were five women I did not interview present. As usual, *hora latina* (latin timing) prevailed, meaning that although the meeting was set to officially begin at 9:00 am, people would be trickling in anywhere

between 9:00 and 10:30. The other issue of course was transportation. We had agreed on Saturday as the best day because buses were less crowded than during the Monday to Friday work week, allowing for the probability of the disabled women to travel with less hassles.

I began the meeting welcoming everyone and outlined our agenda for that day. I also gave a brief review of the purpose of the group, based on the group's comments to me had been. Eileen then spoke to the group, sharing some of her hopes and expectations for the next 5 months for the group and for ACOGIPRI.

Three quarters of the meeting was used for introductions and an activity to help group members know each other more, followed by an activity for the women to examine their own lives a bit more. The activities were structured so that everyone had to participate to some degree or another, introducing their partner to the large group and sharing pieces of their lives from their "tree of life" with the group. Many women commented that they had never shared their hopes and dreams with other people before, and that no one had ever asked them what they thought in such a manner. Some women only participated in these two "required" times, while others were quick to ask questions and give opinions.

The last part of the meeting was dedicated to administrivia; reconfirming the best time, day, of the meetings, discussing transportation issues which were paramount for most of the women and finally, talking about the methodology I as a facilitator would be using throughout our sessions together. My role during this part of the meeting was mostly asking questions to the group, regarding meeting structure, schedules, the

procedure we could use to 'tackle' issues, and helping them reach consensus, and also helping a few of the less vocal women have their voices heard. The entire group was in agreement to meeting every two weeks, re-iterating that Saturday mornings were the best time. It was obvious that a few of the women had more skills at being in a group, and were quicker to formulate and express their opinions. Other women were more quick to say, "you decide", and seemed frustrated when I would not do that. I discussed the general outline of the next meeting, telling the group that at the next meeting the group would have to decide on the direction we would take.

The meeting ended on a happy note, as ACOGIPRI invited everyone for lunch. Conversation continued, mostly about other parts of one's lives as we ate lunch together.

### **Facilitator Reflection**

I decided that because the group was made up of women with such varying skills and abilities, alternative kinds of communication and literacies was particularly important in order for all the women to be able to express themselves. It was evident from our first group meeting that a few of the women had the ability to express themselves orally very well, while other might be able to draw, sing, write or express themselves with a literacy strategy I had never thought of before. For the rest of the meetings, I relied heavily on the techniques I had developed working as a trainer as well as the skills I developed working in literacy programs. I felt that modeling alternative communication techniques were very important because most of the women who attended the meetings were used to being lectured at and were not accustomed to popular, participatory methods. I looked for ways that allowed for varying

communications techniques to then be "translated" by the group into material for discussion, dialogue and reflection.

### Investigation, Momentum and Conflicts

#### **Meetings Two, Three, Four and Five -**

#### *Diagnostica Personal y de la Comunidad* -(**Personal, Family and Community Diagnosis**)

Keeping in mind my personal desire to acknowledge and validate various types of expression and knowledges, I decided that a way to begin exploring the generative themes around self, family and community would best be explored without complicated writing and reading.

For the second meeting, there were two agendas overlapping: to share skills based in popular education so that this group would be able to work with other disabled women and at the same time, introduce "research" activities that required the use of tools for analysis and reflection about their own situation.

The second and third meetings dealt specifically with the individual and the family were important because women who did not say very much at the first meeting, and had less experiences being in a group, began participating and voicing their opinions more, especially by the time we began discussing family. I felt a good momentum take shape as we developed as a group. Also, we were using a less "traditional" way of documenting, exploring and talking about issues. For these topics, we used drawing, cutting, pasting, painting, singing and any other technique except for only writing. This

seemed to make a big difference for the women who felt inhibited by their ability to express themselves with only writing. It also set up a nice dynamic of praise and acknowledgment among the group members for those who had hidden talents. During the second meeting, we looked at the "generative themes" that I had arranged on flip chart paper, small pieces of cardboard and also read to the group. Small groups discussed and analyzed these "quotes" and reflected on what the quotes were saying. It was a difficult task because it touched very personal issues, but the group was interested to discuss, especially when I told them that each group needed to present to the large group using anything **but** writing to give their opinions about what they had been examining.

The third and fourth meeting's themes varied: family members ability to help or hinder individual women's desires, opportunities for self development, loneliness, difficulties at school or finding a job, financial problems, transportation problems and health problems. I used techniques such as family configurations, genealogy charts and community mapping to discuss self, family and the community. The fifth meeting ended with two of the women disagreeing over an issue relating to disability oppression which left the entire group feeling a little low.

A pattern emerged as far as structure was concerned, we would meet for about one and half hours, have a coffee break and then meet again until 12:00 or 12:30. However, the group still relied on me to provide leadership for the discussions and the meeting organization.

## **Facilitator Reflection**

These meetings set up a lot of dialoging and discussion among group members and also challenged them to think about how to do that. There were lots of friendly disagreeing going on and although people were more comfortable telling each other they didn't agree, they still looked to me to provide the leadership and end an argument by saying who was correct and who was mistaken. I felt uncomfortable being seen this way and wondered if my facilitation style was contributing to this sense of me by some group members.

The other piece I thought might be making a difference as to why I was seen as the dispute settler were my credentials and the fact that I was an abled bodied gringa from the outside, so I must have the correct answers.

Many disabled women develop low-self esteem after years of being told, "you can't do it, you can't possibly know". The assumption that because they are physically unable to do something often spills over into the assumption that they are also mentally incapable of thinking and therefore knowing. Judged by the outside world as being disabled both in spirit and body, many disabled women often give up the notion they can achieve things with other parts of their beings, principally because they have been told for so long that they **can't**. The same seemed to be true for the ability to think and have valid opinions. Some of the women in the group would immediately back down if their opinion was challenged by another woman, often saying, "you must be right". The few women who felt more comfortable disagreeing were mostly the ones with a higher formal educational level, whereas the quieter one, were often the less educated and less

used to working in groups.

Equally as interesting was one woman who believed that every opinion she had was correct. Using complicated academic vocabulary to intimidate other group members, she would scare them away from a theme, using flowery language about such themes as feminism, women, disability and oppression, economics, development, anything she felt was relevant at the moment. Once during a conversation where she stated that all women with disabilities should be feminists to fight for their human rights, she belittled another woman who said she didn't want to be a feminist; "you say you are not a feminist because you think they don't want to get married and form a home." Whereas the offended woman answered back, "no, I just don't want to be associated with feminists if it means I have to talk like you."

Although I was excited by the increased energy and excitement in the group, I was worried that the two particularly vocal women who frequently argued could easily upset the delicate balance the group had achieved. As the group was beginning to move into more of a decision making role in relation to dialogue and issues raised, I decided we would just go for it and use the group structure to mediate any serious conflicts.

### Ownership and New Motivations

#### **Meetings Six and Seven**

Meeting six ended up being canceled as only two women had showed up at 10:15. Although I was used to the fact that people trickled in anywhere between 9:00 and 10:30, it was not a good sign that only two women had showed up. I wondered if the tone at the

end of the last meeting had influenced individual's decisions to come to ACOGIPRI or not, however, since we had a three week break instead of two because of a religious holiday week, people may have just gotten off track. We called people at the beginning of the next week and set our sites for the following Saturday.

### **Meeting Seven - *Como Ser Facilitadora* (How to Be a Facilitator)**

At this meeting, we had visitors from Guatemala, who had come to ACOGIPRI to learn about the Women's Program. Three women from a religious based disabled persons group spent three days with us, to learn more about forming a women's group.

Because we had visitors that wanted concrete skills so that they could return to Guatemala to begin organizing women, Eileen, the Women's Program director, asked me if I could do a workshop that would touch on basic skills for facilitators. At first, I wasn't sure this session really fit into what we had been doing as a group, but, after thinking about the failure of the previous meeting to materialize, I wondered if some concrete skills that could be tried in the community weren't a good thing. With the help of Maritza, a group member, we called and sent telegrams to the other members, informing them of the meeting as well as the topic.

This meeting was very well attended and some women brought friends as well. Comments from the group included, "now we can go out and find other disabled women and know how to talk to them" and "I could never talk in front of a group like that". Other women were anxious to hear "what it was like" in Guatemala, and asked the three women to share about their experiences, were they were in the process to organize and form a group of women, and what some of the "key" issues were for their Guatemalan



counterparts. Although there was a "formal" part of this meeting that I facilitated, I felt an increased ownership on the part of the group and the great deal of participation and initiative taking seemed to illustrate this.

### **Facilitator Reflection**

I think that having the women from Guatemala was important to the Women's Program. It made them look at themselves and all the work they had been doing not only personally, but as a group in order to keep the momentum of a Women's Group going. Towards the end of the meeting, when the sharing was taking place, many of the women at the table were able to contribute at least one strategy they had done in order to either come to a meeting or involve other women in the group. This meeting gave a much needed boost to the self-esteem of individual group members and the group as a whole. Listening to lunchtime conversation, I heard comments about how far the Women's Program had come, "isn't it funny that they want our opinions about how to work with women?" and comments such as, "remember when we were in the initial organizing stages like they are?"

### Action and Re-framing: More Information Gathering

### **Meetings Eight and Nine - *Comunicacion y la Mujer Discapacitada* - Communication and the Disabled Women**

The previous meeting set the stage for thinking and talking about action. The workshop on skills to be a facilitator got group members thinking in different directions. And the environment was also providing opportunities to think about action. At the end

of April, the group was invited to give two *charlas* (talks) - one in San Salvador and one in Metapan, in the northwest corner of El Salvador.

This meeting focused on language and its use; the topic came up at the beginning of our meeting, when the women began to discuss and think of how they wanted to be called/labelled. In the disability circles in the U.S. this is always an issue, and in Latin America it is equally important. Brainstorming of the various terms used in society to describe disability or those who have a disability lead to lengthy discussion. Women were very vocal about what they perceived society meant by different terms used to describe a disabled person, and how that often lead them to see oneself as having **ability** or **dis-ability**. There was agreement that terms such as *invalida* and *minusvalida*<sup>7</sup> should never be used to describe anyone because these terms made women (and men) see themselves as useless and also conveyed that image to society. Other terms such as *discapacitada* and *con limitaciones*<sup>8</sup> were determined by the group to be more acceptable because the disabled women or the women with limitations could still have abilities and were also being described as being seen as more than just their disability or limitation.

When they asked me how disability was labelled in the U.S. and I told them that currently one says "persons with different abilities", everyone at the table said that they didn't like the term because it didn't really say anything, because everyone has different abilities.

The discussion was pushed into another direction by one group member who

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<sup>7</sup> invalid and less than valid

<sup>8</sup> disabled and with limitations

asked the question, "how do people who can't communicate verbally describe themselves?" And before the group could attempt to answer this, another women asked, "how can we work with women that don't read, write, see, or hear?" "How can we help them see themselves differently?"

An enormous list was generated by the group, and I was encouraged to add to it, which I did. Then the idea from the floor was that everyone would develop a communication technique (listed on the brainstorm) with the idea of how to reach women "out there".

The meeting ended with much excitement and as we discussed the upcoming workshops, everyone agreed that we should wait to see what was produced by the group to see if it was something we could use.

### **Facilitator Reflection**

Although the entire group agreed to create a communication tool, it was obvious that a few of the women were more invested in it than others. It had been an exciting meeting, and alot of ground had been covered. Group members varied in their willingness to take on the responsibility to create something and I think the ones that were most eager to "do something" had made the less eager ones feel pressured into saying, "oh yes, of course we will do that".

The next meeting and the outreach workshops that were to follow were definitely the highlight of the project. The other exciting piece of information for the group was that we had received funding for the Summer Institute, which meant that group members could take on facilitator roles during the two week seminar that summer.

And finally, outreach had begun in earnest. With the impetus of recruitment for the Summer Institute, the Women's Program began looking for places to give *charlas* for interested women to find out more about ACOGIPRI and the possibility of forming a local support group.

Together we brainstormed what an informational *charla* could look like, and also got a planning committee together for not only recruitment and outreach, but for other parts of the upcoming seminar. Actions included:

1. choosing teams to go out on outreach visits
2. developing a short *charla* about the history of ACOGIPRI and the Women's Program
3. developing a short *charla* about why women need the opportunity to meet without men
4. working to develop a communication tool for outreach

Meeting Nine got postponed a few times and ended up happening three weeks later. Although not all members created a tool, the ones that were presented to the group were well thought out, extremely creative and also something that could be reproduced and implemented in community programs. The members who had created tools felt good about them and most talked about why it was important to use not only with other disabled women but also in the abled body world so that they could re-frame (author's word) society's views of women with disabilities.

The last activity of the meeting was the group who had given a *charla* in Metapan

reporting back to the group what that experience had been like. I had gone along to observe and be there as support. It was interesting for me to hear them tell the others how they felt it had gone, what was positive and negative about their presentation and what could be improved upon for next time.

### Ending the Research/Support Group

#### ***La Ultima Reunion - Evaluacion - The Final Meeting***

As we geared up for the Summer Institute, my own research was coming to an end, and the group was feeling like they were being split in too many directions. Our last meeting as a support group was held as an evaluation and also with the understanding that after the Summer Institute, they would begin again in some form or another. It was hard to find a good time to meet, people were moving into the summer and vacations, school was ending and people's time was becoming harder to spare for Saturday meetings.

In a break from tradition, we met on a Thursday, the only time a majority could attend. The entire group was not present at the final meeting.

We discussed what ending the group meant, we shared what our individual experiences had been, and we evaluated what we felt we had accomplished up until the point we were at. We discussed what the group had meant to each woman, and what impact the group had made as a group on both the disabled community and the able bodied community.

We listed recommendations for future support groups, and those who wanted to write, were given that opportunity. There was consensus that this type of support group was important and necessary. Other suggestions included other possible topics for discussion and also the recommendation that more time be spent on self-esteem needs of the group members and less time spent on issues of "other" disabled women. Some women recommended different schedules or meeting times, and the possibility of meeting at various locations to accommodate those who had to travel a great deal. Everyone agreed that refreshments were very important. Everyone also said that they appreciated the support group and it was an important piece in their lives.

#### **Facilitator Reflection**

The atmosphere was not quite as upbeat as the past meetings. Part of it may have been the extreme heat and also the fact that it was an afternoon meeting as opposed to our normal morning meetings. The women did seem to appreciate the support group, and they all said that they would continue to participate when it started up again.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **REFLECTIONS AND OUTCOMES**

#### Group Evaluation and Recommendations for ACOGIPRI and Future Support Groups

As facilitator, I lead the evaluation discussion that took place during our final meeting the third week of June 1994. Although the group was able to comment on the assessment, it was designed by me.

The following discussion presents themes of comments and recommendations made by group members. Additionally, I assess the project based on my own goals and objectives outlined earlier in this document.

Group members had many purposes for wanting to meet as a group, 1) to find other disabled women outside of San Salvador and work with them; 2) skill building so that they would be able to hold meetings and discussions with other disabled women; and 3) they wanted a forum to meet as just "women" to discuss and share common problems and possible solutions. I had my own purpose, which was part of my research in conjunction with ACOGIPRI and the Inter-American Foundation. I wanted to test a model of intervention that would explore and validate different kinds of knowledge. For me this model should include skill building that would help disabled women develop a way to access and/or create social and economic programs in their environment that could possibly impact their lives.

Through the interviews and home visits as well as group meetings, group

members influenced and impacted the assessment of all our purposes.

Every women agreed that the support group was beneficial and should be ongoing. They saw that they could have a greater role in helping other women with disabilities find a space and voice by doing it first themselves.

I see my role as being to fight for people with disabilities. I can be that voice for those women who can't yell. I can go out and help women find a way to be productive, just like when I first began coming to ACOGIPRI in August of last year. It's a process...

All that I have learned, I wasn't like this six months after my accident. Now, I think that when someone sees me, they see me for my capacities, and the way I see myself and my value. These are all things that we have to share with other women, and here [ACOGIPRI] is the best place to do it.

As far as educating the abled bodied, not much was mentioned during our assessment and evaluations, I don't know if people really remembered it or not. The only time it was mentioned was in conjunction with language and how society "labelled" disabled women.

Women gave recommendations about format, schedules, purposes and goals. It seemed that although they had started with the goal of wanting to do outreach to find other women, many also felt that they wanted more time to devote to their own needs. When asked for recommendation for topics for discussion, almost all of the women mentioned wanting to spend more time on self-esteem and the issue of their own sexuality. A few recommendations stated that they needed to spend more time on



themselves and weren't **ready** to think about other disabled women.

Most members agreed that the group fulfilled its goals and purposes to provide a space for collective discussion of problems and concerns, and possible solutions, but again, many women wanted more time for this activity and less for the outreach piece. Because of the feeling of camaraderie, group members began to see that they weren't alone in their problems. A bit contrarily, most members felt that the group had met its goal of outreach and were pleased that more women could access the services of ACOGIPRI either in San Salvador or through field visits by The Women's Program group members.

Many women noted that they felt glad to know that they were not alone and that their problems were other women's problems, too.

No one ever asked me the kinds of questions you asked me, Joan, and also I never stopped to think that other people felt the way I did. It feels good to know that people are interested in listening.

It was important to know that what I have to say is important to other people. I never thought other people wanted to know about my disability and how it felt everyday of my life, but you asked.

However, there were many comments requesting that the group touch on more inter-personal issues that we had not spent sufficient time on: self-esteem, reproductive health for disabled women and sexuality being the most frequently mentioned by group members.

There was also many comments thanking me for starting the group off the way I did.

I like the way you, [Joan], ask questions and don't give the answers. You make us think.

You make hard things easy to understand. I didn't think I could find our information the way we did, doing it as a group helped.

You learned patience during the group, you had lots of patience with us. You explained things easily so we could all understand.

We did problem solving, that's a good way to learn, there are no answers already made.

### Evaluation of the Process

My broad goal was to use a participatory research framework of investigation, education and action to understand the social reality of disabled women. There was no guarantee that the "action" would lead to social transformation on either the personal or collective level, or that group members might have seen the need for change. Another purpose of my research was to understand the knowledges created by this group of disabled women, and how these kinds of "literacies" allowed for the possibility of re-framing and transforming actions.

On the whole, I do not believe that the various investigation activities we did demystified the research process and made it more accessible for these women. However, I do feel that these research activities we did as a group, in pairs, or individually helped the women better understand their own social world and the role they and the people around them play in it. I rather doubt that many of them would call our activities "research". They would probably be more likely to state that I had done

research through our group process. However, I do feel that the processes we used were useful investigations into their social realities. The documenting, writing, dictating, drawing, pasting, cutting, singing, and other communication techniques that helped them investigate themselves, their families, their communities and their worlds were the tools of analysis.

The collection of information, analyzing and summarizing done in these activities were all useful in helping the group members recognize the things they knew about their world as valid as well as the different ways they had come to know these things. I also feel that some of the members of the group felt ownership of these skills, and saw them as useful for helping them to work with other disabled women in a similar group.

I feel that one of the strengths of the process was the educational parts. Using my trainer's background to share information in a non-traditional way, using popular education techniques, icebreakers, flipcharts, etc. all made both the analysis and the educational pieces of the process more accessible. One member commented,

all of the material used was educational but fun. I knew I was learning but it wasn't hard work. Also, it made it simple and easy to understand.

Although I do not think we got to deep structural analysis of capitalist systems, power, gender, classism, we were able to do some exploration around issues of disability oppression and labels using a problem tree and other techniques that permitted deeper analysis. I think some of the group members understood a bit more about disability oppression and how the relationship of disability and gender affected them in their everyday life. They understood a bit more about labels and how the relationship between

and labels and expectations worked, and if nothing else, they had created an environment where these kinds of issues could be discussed.

Probably the weakest part of the process was the action. Although small actions were taking place within the program, I do not think the group as a whole reached a level of commitment to an external collective action. I would definitely say I saw individual transformations among the group members; some of the women were going out to give *charlas* (talks), others were writing their stories for the bi-monthly *boletina*, some were helping to document other's stories by acting as scribe, and on a more personal level, women who had come to the first meetings and would not talk or if they did, would not look anyone in the face, were quicker to give an opinion without someone having to ask them what they thought and would look you in the eyes when they talked to you.

However, as one participant said,

But, to get to there, how can I do it? Perhaps it a process...  
We pick a goal. To know the world of the disabled woman. I have theoretical knowledge, but now it's the practice. ACOGIPRI opened the doors for me, now I need to show that I can open more spaces, and I will. But I'm not going to achieve it in one day, its a process.

### Recommendations/Implications

This study has shown both the strengths and limitations of alternative paradigm research. To say that this "study" was an overwhelming success would not be accurate, however, to say it was an astounding failure would not be accurate, either. The strength of the alternative research paradigm is the belief in possibility, the belief in transformation on both a personal and social level and the belief that one can struggle

against the dominant forces that oppress and devalue difference by creating research methods and processes that challenge those dominant forces and its ideology. I feel that this process has achieved that "possibility" with these women from ACOGIPRI.

If another researcher were to try this process with a similar group, there are a few recommendations based on our group analysis of the process as well as my own observations:

- 1) As indicated by many of the women, they wanted to spend more time on knowing themselves, exploring issues such as self esteem, sexuality, etc. I can now see the importance of this. As we moved through the family literacy model of individual, family and community, there should have been an opportunity to return to the individual.
- 2) No research model like this can be successful without a link to an "insider". Without my connection to Eileen, I would never have been seen as "legitimate" in the eyes of the women in the group nor with the broader disability community.
- 3) Speaking the language is not enough. Although I had not spent time in El Salvador, I had experiences with Salvadoran women who were in the U.S. for training. I was able to understand through their language, words and meanings how they understood conflict, *machismo*, civil war and disability. Reading about these things is an important activity, but without some understanding about how these issues are viewed, talked about and communicated in that culture, speaking the native language is not enough.

I maintain that the largest limitation of this study was time. Like my friend Angelica mentioned above, I feel as though we can open more spaces in the understanding of how we can work with marginalized groups, such as disabled women in El Salvador, to create a process for social change that allows for and encourages different kinds of knowing, seeing and readings of the world. Unfortunately, opening spaces is a

process that requires time, often a lifetime, and will never come about as a result of a seven month research project. However, I am confident that the spaces opened by the group will only grow wider.

Because this kind of work has rarely been done with disabled women, I feel that this process provides us with unique insights into the world of disabled women in El Salvador and how their insights can potentially help us design and provide meaningful interventions that can help other disabled women better meet their needs in their own reality.

## **APPENDICES**

1. Training Designs

2. Literacy Artifacts

Lic. Joan B. Cohen

**Conociéndonos**  
miércoles, 16 de febrero

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>9:15am</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Palabras de Eileen</li><li>- Firmas de las presentas</li><li>- Expectativas del grupo</li></ul> |
| <b>10:00am</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rompehielo</li></ul>  |
| <b>10:45am</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- actividad del árbol de la vida</li></ul>  |
| <b>11:30am</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- metas para las capacitaciones</li></ul>   |
| <b>12:15am</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- almuerzo</li></ul>  |



## Conociéndonos

16 febrero 1994

Empezamos con un **romehielo** de parejas. Cada una tenía que escuchar sobre la vida de su pareja y luego presentar a su pareja al grupo.

Después, hicimos una actividad que se llama "**El Árbol de la Vida**".

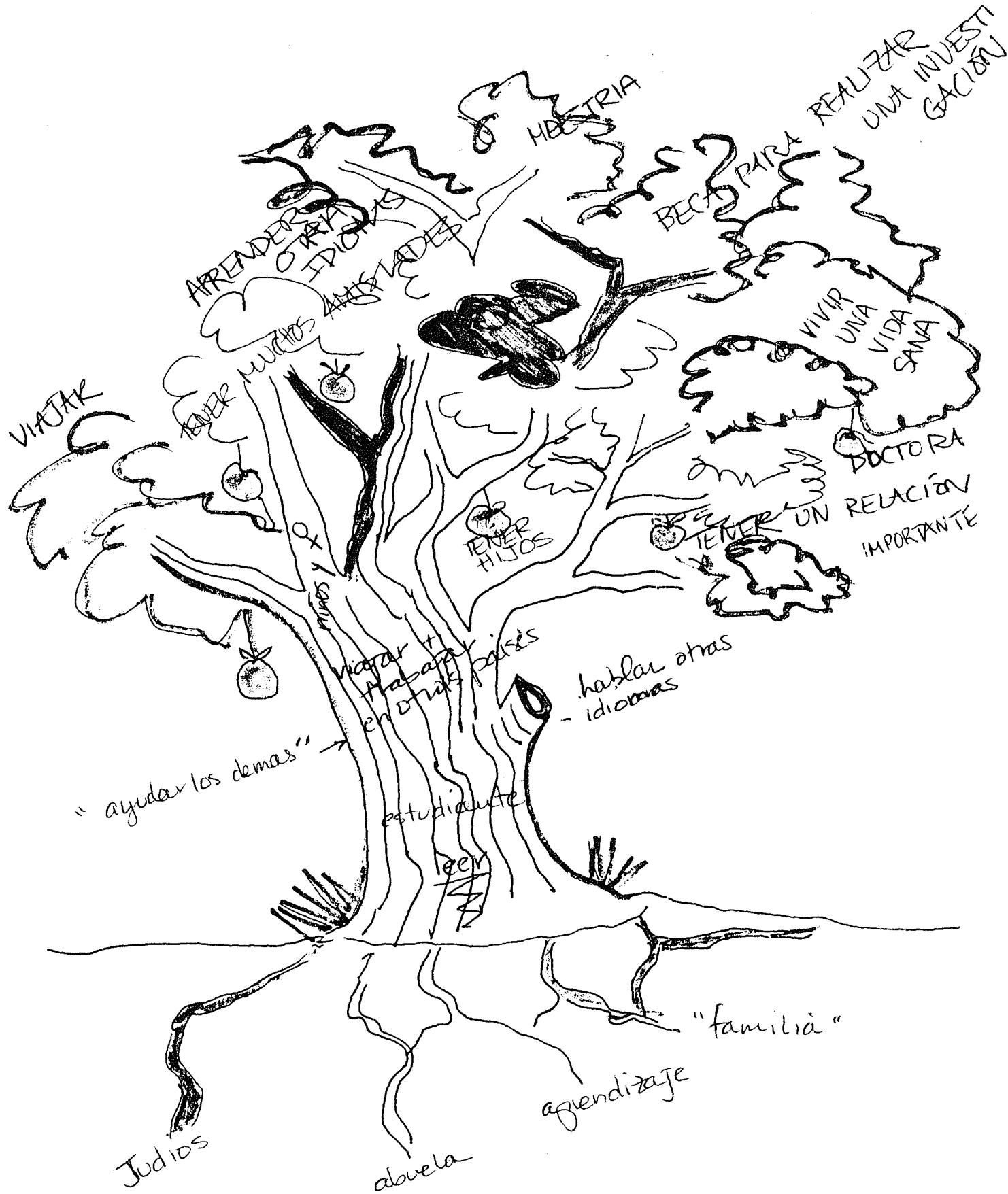
las raíces = su historia, familia, cosas y/o personas importantes en su vida

el tronco = su metas

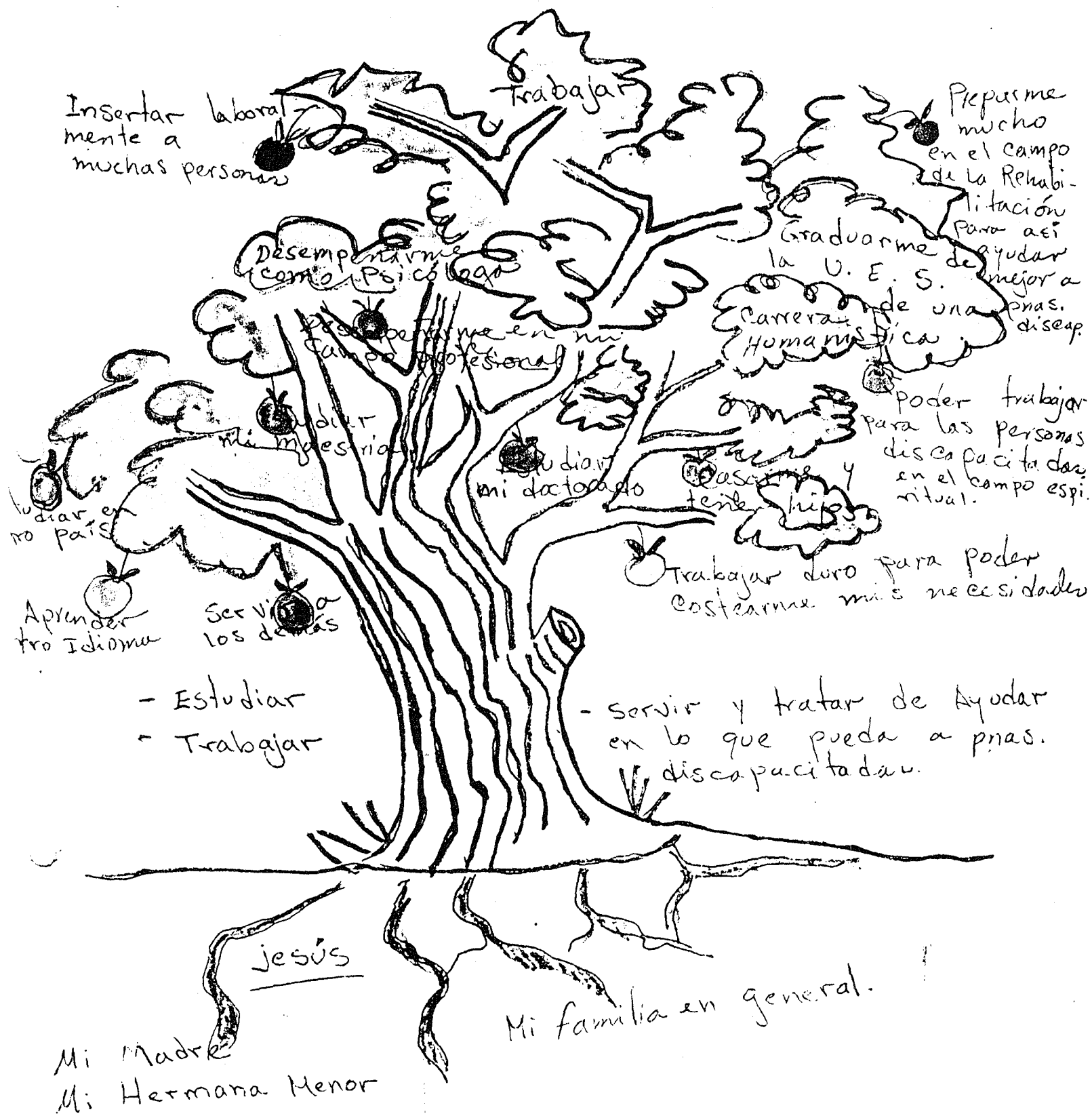
las hojas = cosas realizadas

ej. trabajo, estudios, tener familia

las frutas = sus esperanzas, sueños



16/02/94



OK.

haber trabajado muchos años  
cuando el trabajo

algunos viejos

conservar buenos amigos

pero haber educado bien a mis hijos

order tener de  
nuevo una casa

caída

creer  
mucho  
espiritualmente

poder ayudar  
a otras personas  
con discapacida.

poder trabajar de  
nuevo, para mejor  
negocio

ver a cada uno de  
mis hijos rescatados  
plenamente.

mis metas fueron alcanzada  
en parte; porque una de ellas  
fue casarme y lo logré pero no  
por la Iglesia. En mis estudios  
no logré estudiar lo q' quería,  
tuve que empezar de  
secretaria o maestra,  
mucho trabajo en mi  
carrera.

Me mandó  
fue la 4 de  
hermanos.

mi papá el menor de 2 hermanos, ellos 2 se casaron con  
2 hermanas; de mis tíos fueron 10 hijos y de mis padres 9; mis  
primos y nosotras nos criamos juntos, formamos una familia unida y  
muy numerosa, esto sirvió para aprender a ayudarnos mucho en todo.  
Cuando tenía 21 años me case y tube 7 hijos y un hijo  
que siempre fueron lo mas importante en mi vida.

A hand-drawn sketch of a landscape. A river flows from the top right towards the bottom left. The river is labeled 'Hodges' in the upper right and 'Hemlock' in the middle. On the left bank, there are hills labeled 'Hemlock' and 'Hemlock'. The sketch is done in black ink on a white background.

[illegible]

## Diagnostico de la Comunidad

26 de febrero 1994

### 1. ¿Que es una familia? ¿Como es una familia?

Para empezar, cada una dibujó su familia y que significa familia para ella.

Para la mayoría de las mujeres, familia significa más que su propia familia, tales como amigos. compañeros de sus lugares de estudios, compañeros de su trabajo y también personas en sus iglesias

Vamos a usar estos conceptos de la familia para nuestra unidad de análisis para una diagnostico de la comunidad.

### ¿Que es una diagnóstico comunitario?

Un diagnostico comunitario es el estudio de la **Realidad** de los pobladores para:

**detectar** los problemas, necesidades y fuerzas de los pobladores;

**descubrir** las causas de los mismos con el propósito de definir una línea de acción efectiva para resolverlos.

Un diagnostico comunitario se propone así investigar la **realidad** para descubrir:

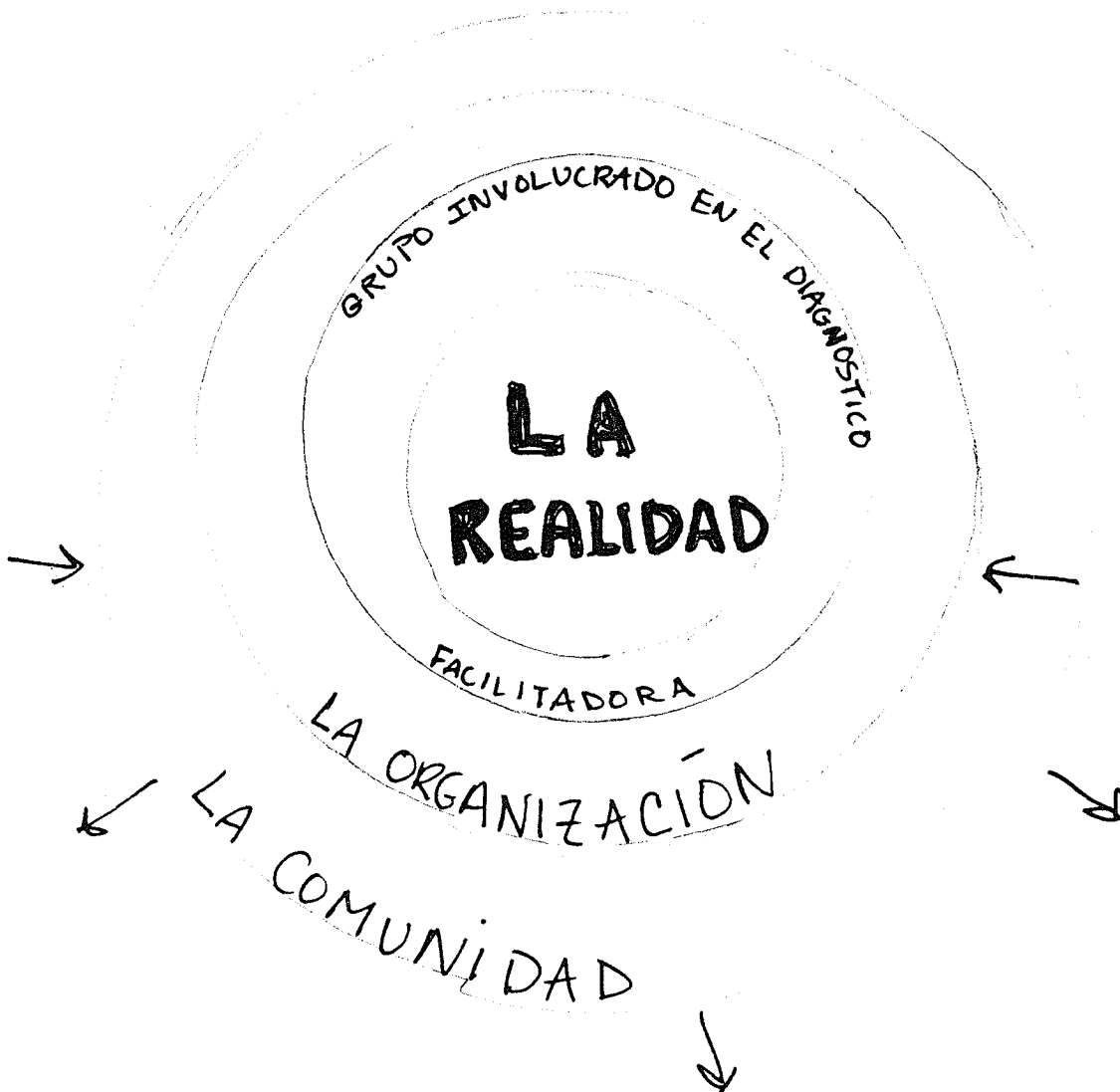
- \* **características** mas importantes (numero de familias/personas, nivel de ingresos, actividades en la casa, y económica...);
- \* **necesidades** mas urgentes (salud, educación, empleo);
- \* **percepciones, valores, expectativas** mas significativos y
- \* **causas** de los problemas (ya sea económicas, políticas, naturaleza)

¿ **Preguntas?** importantes par averiguar antes hacer su diagnóstico:

- \* ¿Que nos preocupa?
- \* ¿Cuales necesidades tenemos?
- \* ¿A quien o que tenemos?
- \* ¿Cales son nuestras expectativas?
- \* ¿Porque nos sucede esto o aquello?
- \* ¿Como podíamos resolverlos?
- \* ¿Que hemos hecho hasta ahora?
- \* ¿Porque es importante el problema?

**El diagnostico es necesario porque:**

- \* identifica los problemas mas importantes y detecta sus causas
- \* orienta y da dirección al grupo
- \* asegura que las líneas de acción apunten efectivamente a las raíces mas profundas de los problemas (no solo síntomas superficiales)





## Algunas Técnicas usadas en el diagnostico de la comunidad

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| ♪ OBSERVACIÓN DIRECTA | ♪ JUEGOS           |
| ♪ ENTREVISTAS         | ♪ FOROS, ASAMBLEAS |
| ♪ REUNIONES           | ♪ ENCUESTAS        |
| ♪ CENSOS              | ♪ FOTO-REPORTAJES  |

### ¿ Como elegir las técnicas adecuadas para realizar el diagnostico?

El grupo considera:

- \* los objetivos del diagnostico;
- \* los recursos disponibles'
- \* la aceptación que tendrá la técnica elegida y capacidad y conocimientos de las miembras del grupo

Hoy, practicamos 2 diferente tipos de observación:

#### Observación de punto de vista:

- un lugar y tiempo fijo
- tener la intención de observar algo  
por ejemplo: interacción en la familia: hora del almuerzo

#### Observación del tema:

- Propósito/Objetivo definido

ejemplos:

#### Observación de Punto de Vista

| <u>Lugar, hora</u>                     | <u>Observación</u>   |
|--|--|
| - en la iglesia, a las 3 por las tarde | - ♀ estaban juntas<br>- ♂ estaban juntos; pero no se mezclaron<br>- hablaron sobre una campaña de alfabetización |
| - en la cocina , 11 por mañana         | - ♀ haciendo comida las pequeñas ayudan las ♀ la<br>- los ♂ vuelvan a la escuela y juegan afuera                 |

## Observación del Tema

\* Buscar cosas específicas según su objetivo

por ejemplo: la vecina fue al puesto de salud para vacunar su hija; no había vacunas porque nunca llegaron de la capital. TEMA: salud y vacunas

## PRACTICA

¿Que es una familia?

Indicadores importantes para definir la familia:

|           |              |            |            |                         |
|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|
| distancia | religión     | comida     | casa       | económica               |
| comunidad | tiempo libre | matrimonio | festivales | obligaciones familiares |

## LA CASA

¿ familias viven juntos? ¿niños quedan en la casa hasta que edad?

**EEUU:** 18 años - salen, ir a estudiar  
muy individualista  
20-25 años, viven aparte de sus padres

**El Salvador:** hijos viven con mama y papa hasta se casan  
cuando se casen, viven en la casa dependiendo de nivel económico  
si tiene \$, pone su propia casa

## COMIDA

**EEUU:** simple, sopas, poca substanciosa,  
hotdog, pizza, sandwich de atún,  
soda, artificiales/procesadas,  
latas, no es fresca, mucho productos de leche,  
ensalada, mucho carne

**El Salvador:** mucha grasa, mucha frijoles, muy cocida, natural,  
verduras contaminada/sucias, variada  
muchas harinas, maíz, RICA, simple, falta especias,  
pequeño, mucha contaminación

## Practica y tarea

llenar este hoja:

familia    viviendo/oficio    alimentación    salud    historia    vida/costumbres

¿ CUÁLES SON LOS PROBLEMAS MÁS IMPORTANTES ?

## Diagnostico en la Comunidad

12 marzo 1994

**I. Rompehielo** - Yo me voy a vacaciones y voy a llevar \_\_\_\_\_

(una dinámica para practicar la destreza de oír y escuchar que dicen sus compañeras)

**II. Practica de la diagnostico comunitario:**

### Ejemplo #1:

la familia Guerrero

viven en Lomas de San Francisco

papa - Antonio 45 años

hija - Jimena 14 años

mama - Ana Maria 42 años

hija - 11 años

hijo - 9 años

hijo - 4 años

**alimentación** - el papa come de todo  
la mama solamente frutas y ensalada  
los niños comen mal : mucho pizza, coca, pupusa, hamburguesa

**costumbres** - conversación sobre construcción de casa y la iglesia son católicos, evangélicos  
- hay mucha competencia y gritos/pleitos

**causas y resultados** - falta de respeto y falta de control

### Ejemplo #2

Familia Santos (campesinos)

mama 40 años - ama de casa

hija (de la mama) 20 años = hijos = 3,5 años

papa 45 años - abanil

hijos 12 años, 8 años

**viven** en una champa de lamina y cartón cerca el Río Aselhuate

**alimentación** - tortilla, arroz, frijoles y a vez en cuando huevos y carne

**salud** - niños: gripe, mucosa, tos, problemas de bronchia  
adultos: dolores de cabeza, estómago y espalda

**historia** - desplazados por la guerra

**vida/costumbres** - católicos

asistan fiestas patronales

"no se meten con nadie para evitarse de problemas"

**problemas** - personales en la comunidad

gritan mucho

ansiedad, inseguridad

viven día por día

**causas de conflictos** - hijos de la mama y el papa pelean mucho

### **Ejemplo #3**

Eva - madre soltera

**viva** en una habitación que tiene cama, cocina, y caja para la ropa

**alimentación** - huevos/frijoles, tortillas

el bebe - leche materno

**salud** - la mama cansada, anémica

el bebe - saludable

**historia/costumbres** - madre soltera, no tiene familia

queja constante sobre la vida

trabaja como secretaria y el bebe se va a una guardería infantil

el papa del niño no ayuda económicamente

Eva hace doble hornada

### **Ejemplo #4**

familia Mojia Perez

mama 52 años                      hijo Julio Cesar 27 años

papa 56 años                      hermanos de 25 y 23 años

Julio Cesar - abogado

hermanos trabajan en ANTEL

mama ama de casa

papa retirado

**alimentación** - frijoles, arroz, tortillas, café, pan, frescos

comen afuera de la casa mucho

**conversaciones** - política, iglesia, amistades,

**costumbres/historia -**

ayuda amigos, setimental, undios, responsable  
son catolicos practicantes  
papa y mama evangelicos - hijos ne estan de acuerdo hay  
mucho conflicto sobre religion  
conflicto - fueran de la colonia

### III. Arbol de la Causalidad



El problema debe ubicarse en el **tronco** y se debe tratar de encontrar **las causas o raíces** del problema, contestando esta preoguna, ¿por qué existe el problema?

se ubican **las consecuencias** en **la copa** es decir, ¿como el problema afecta a la comunidad?

### IV. Práctica

#### Ejemplo #1

**problema/consecuencias:** **hombre rechaza el hijo de su esposa**  
el nino: enojado, agresivo, triste  
disobediente, no se va a al escuela  
celoso falta respeto otro adultos

**causas:** la cultura, submision de la ♀,  
machismo, inseguridad, mala orientacion,

ignorancia, hijo no quiere ser dominado por hombre que no es su papa

vamos a mirar más profundamente la causa: **la cultura**

### **La cultura**

preguntas:    ¿y qué tiene la cultura?  
                  ¿que son los raíces?  
                  ¿de donde viene los costumbres?

- patronas y normas de vida
- costumbres de la cultura
- "los hombres siempre acerca mas a las niñas"
- tradiciones - ¿de que?
- herencias
- influencia de costumbres Mayas junto con catolicismo y Español
- trans-culturacismo
- nivel de educacion/analfabetismo
- mitos
- **educación - ¿de quien?**

miramos mas profundamente la causa de falta de educación entre la causa de la cultura

### **La educación**

- precario
- clasista
- diferente educacion por diferentes personas
- discriminadora
- \$/economia
- ♀ menos acceso de la educacion
  - problemas de niños, tiene que cuidar la casa, horario, distancia
- desigualdad de derechos

### **¿Y QUE MAS?**

- falta de conscientizar la población
- informar
- hacer nuevo proyectos
- evaluar y compartir información sobre el problema
- escuela de padres sobre problemas en la comunidad re:jovenes/padres
- informar sobre el sistema de la familia
- asistencia del gobierno ¿como? comunidades y familia
- el gobierno falta informacion
- el gobierno no priorizar educación

## **Ejemplo #2**

**problema/causas: acceso para personas discapacitadas**

actitudes, educación, mucho frustración, discriminación, rechazo, barreras arquitectónicas

### **Las Causas**

- **falta/no tengan conciencia amplias**
  - \* personas discapacitadas y sociedad
- niegan/rechazan a si misma
- niegan a la realidad
- falta de organización/unión
- falta información
- falta de confrontar/afrontar el problema

### **FALTA DE CONCIENCIA**

- sobre protección familiar
- falta de inteligencia (controversia)
- conveniencia
- no tiene su propio iniciativa
- quiere que los demás le ayuden
- manipular su discapacidad
- Falta de información





## Como Ser Facilitadora

9 de abril 1994

- I. Rompehielo - ► ¿Cuáles son mis valores?**  
- 10 preguntas que contestan las participantes

**La idea principal de esta actividad es para las compañeras escuchar y respetar las respuestas y forma de pensar de sus compañeras. Lo importante es que ellas entienden que no existen respuestas correctas ni incorrectas (y que la facilitadora dicen esta a las compañeras al principio de la actividad).**

1. ¿Cual es su comida favorita?
2. ¿Puede Ud. nombrar algo que le gustaría hacer?
3. ¿Qué cualidades requiere en una amiga?
4. ¿Qué le hace feliz?
5. ¿Qué cosa le hace enojar?
6. ¿Cuáles son los cualidades de un buen esposo?
7. ¿Puede Ud. nombrar algo que le gustaría cambiar en su vecindario?
8. ¿Qué ha hecho Ud. para ayudar a alguien?
9. ¿Si Ud. encontrará \$50.00, como le gastaría?
10. ¿Que diría si Ud. legará a conocer al presidente de su país?

**Después, para analizar esta rompehielo puede hacer preguntas a las compañeras como los siguientes:**

- \* ¿Cuáles fueron las preguntas más fáciles (o más difíciles) de responder? y ¿porque?
- \* ¿Qué aprendieron sobre si mismas que ignoraban antes?

## II. Como ser Facilitadora

### A. ¿qué es una facilitadora? (respuestas del grupo)

- ayuda
- persona comunicadora
- intermediada
- alguien que se integra un grupo
- coordina
- referee/arbitrar

### B. ¿Porque?

- discuta las ideas
- ayuda un grupo llegar a un conclusión sin influir

- ayuda el grupo descubrir sus problemas
- "facilita" algo que no entiende
- a través charla transmitir a sus conocimientos
- mediatiza un grupo con liderazgo
- "facilitar" la comunicación

### C. ¿Como?

- carisma
- empatia
- humana
- puede escuchar, no se enoja con facilidad
- dominar su estados emocionales
- haber aprendido técnicas

### D. ¿ Qué diferencia tiene una maestra y una facilitadora?

**maestra:**

- enseña
- más rígida
- linear
- autoritaria
- segunda madre

**facilitadora:**

- comunica
- no te da reglas
- transmite
- más flexible

### Una Facilitadora

- \* respetar los conocimientos y experiencias que tiene los/las participantes;
- \* ayuda a que las participantes sientan cómodas para expresar sus ideas y discutir los problemas desde sus propios puntos de vista;
- \* guía a las participantes ayudándolas a decidir por si mismas sobre un problema o un asunto; y
- \* hace preguntas y presenta problemas para que las participantes los analicen.

**Facilitar** quiere decir: **Buscar** y **Descubrir**

**NO** darlas respuestas o decirlas lo que deben hacer.

### **III. Habilidades/Destrezas de una Facilitadora**

#### **A. Observación**

- \* del grupo
- \* de las participantes (cada una)
- \* del ambiente
- \* del tiempo

**Todo eso es demasiado importante, porque si una facilitadora no sabe que está pasando a su alrededor de ella siempre, se puede pedir el interés y entusiasmo del grupo muy fácilmente.**

#### **B. Crear un ambiente cómodo y abierto**

\* tipo de lenguaje usado (el lenguaje sofisticado y extraño se puede asustar y intimidar las participantes. La facilitadora tiene que usar el lenguaje común y conocido por las participantes).

\* abierto - en el sentido de dar espacio y respeto a todos los pensamientos y opiniones de las participantes, no importe si la facilitadora no esta de acuerdo.

#### **C. Organización - el punto clave para una facilitadora**

- \* los materiales
- \* el lugar (con espacio suficiente para las participantes)
- \* el tema
- \* el tiempo
- \* refrigerio y/o receso
- \* ventilación
- \* etc.

#### **D. Conocimiento de diferente técnicas y su uso apropiado**

### **IV. Técnicas/Pasos para Facilitadoras - una practica con el rompehielo ¿Cuales son mis valores?**

#### **1) Tener un "propósito" - ¿porque esta llevando a cabo esta actividad?**

En el rompehielo ¿Cuales son mis valores? las participantes descubrirán algunas de las cosas que les gustan y que son importante para ellas.

También, tendrán la oportunidad de ver que estas cosas son diferentes para diferentes personas.

## **2) Los Materiales - preparados**

Visuales, manuales, obras.

En este rompehielo, la facilitadora tenía hecho por papel "bond" las preguntas, marcadores y cinta para colgar la hoja con las preguntas.

## **3) Seguir Pasos**

Tener una secuencia de las actividades y también preguntas para discutir.

1) En el rompehielo, fue importante para explicar que no existen respuestas correctas ni incorrectas. Todos somos diferente y necesitamos comprender y respetar las diferencias.

2) Lea la primera pregunta y pida una voluntaria que la contesta. O, como alternativa, puede dar a las participantes la oportunidad de contestar las preguntas. Se puede escribir las respuestas pero no es obligatorio.

3) Use preguntas como las siguientes para discusión:

- \* ¿Cuales fueron las preguntas mas fáciles (difíciles) de responder?
- \* ¿Que aprendieron sobre si misas que ignoraban antes?

4) REPASO de la actividad y tiempo para comentarios o preguntas de las participantes.

## **V. Repaso de los conocimientos del grupo**

| <b>TÉCNICAS</b>   | <b>USO</b>  |
|---|---|
| 1. Saludo, presentación                                     | al inicio<br>confianza  |
| 2. Rompehielo   | sentir cómodas  |
| 3. Lluvia de ideas  | hacer opinión<br>hacen el grupo participen  |
| 4. charla/materiales  | ilustrar un tema<br>desarrollar un tema<br>dar mejor comprensión<br>notar información |
| 5. el dibujo proyectivo<br>(como el árbol de la casualidad) |   |
| 6. títeres  |   |

7. tiras cómicas

8. radio

9. foros

más gente que una taller  
el tema toca un problema hacia su raíces

10. canción/poemas

11. foto

12. video/slides/diapositivas

13. boletinas

14. socio-dramas

15. dinámicas

16. recreación

**VI. Repaso del tema de la mañana, preguntas y comentarios**

# Comunicación y la Mujer Discapacitada

30 de mayo 1994

## **Rompehielo:**

Cada persona tiene que presentarse en una forma nueva que no solamente usa la voz y palabras.

**Como ejemplo, la facilitadora puede presentarse cantando o usando señas**

(Tener por escrito en papel bond los siguientes preguntas):

## **I. ¿Que es y que quiere decir la comunicación?**

(una pregunta para contestar entre el grupo)

Respuestas del grupo -

- \* expresión
- \* contacto
- \* intercambio de ideas
- \* medio para expresar nuestros pensamientos
- \* hacer conocer
- \* una relación recíproca
- \* una revelación
- \* transmitir ideas
- \* exteriorizar un sentimiento
- \* una emoción

## **¿Para Que Usamos La Comunicación?**

respuestas del grupo -

- + para saber
- + reflexionar
- + conocer sentimientos/ideas
- + relacionar con los demás
- + enseñar
- + motivar
- + explicación
- + aprender
- + informarnos
- + intercambiar experiencias
- + desarrollar
- + obtener lo necesario
- + punto de referencia
- + alternativas
- + entender emociones de los demás
- + el futuro de nuestros hijos

## ¿Cuales Son Algunas Medios de Comunicación?

- |             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| * cartas    | * títeres    |
| * periódica | * telegrama  |
| * radio     | * la palabra |
| * TV        | * ojos       |
| * señas     | * cuerpo     |
| * mímica    | * personas   |
| * canción   | * la danza   |
| * teatro    | * dibujos    |

## II. Comunicación Alternativa y Participatoria

- las practicas de la comunicación (popular) cobran importancia ligadas de la educación popular.
- es un proceso de **investigación y acción**.
- usa la cultura y necesidades de los grupos populares para **TRANSFORMAR** las características de la comunicación dominante.

## III. Principales Características de los Medios Alternativos y Populares de Comunicación

- ⊗ Su contenido surge la realidad misma de los problemas cotidianos, ante la necesidad de informar y formar.
- ⊗ Son útiles para concientizar y organizar a al población alrededor de l;a búsqueda de soluciones.
- ⊗ Son un producto de un equipo, incorporando a quienes tengan habilidades artísticas en la comunidad, entre otros, escritores y artistas.
- ⊗ Se constituyen en instrumentos de reflexión cuyo propósito es incentivar la discusión colectiva.
- ⊗ Su costo de elaboración es sumamente bajo.
- ⊗ Sus contenidos y objetivos son ágiles, dinámicos y precisos.
- ⊗ Este proceso promueva la **autogestión**;



⊗ La participación de los/as participantes en la producción de sus propia cultura a través de la comunicación;

⊗ Grupos organizados e integrados alrededor de una lucha por sus objetivos particulares.

⊗ Es un proceso horizontal, no vertical

1) tiene una conciencia critica

2) a través de una organización

⊗ Es un proceso mas democrático y participativo

⊗ Tiene una dimensión política; comunicacionalmente, esta dimensión equivale a una lucha por la conquista del significado social del grupo.

⊗ Se base en estrategias de comunicación que aseguran las características necesarias para la organización, participación y la creación de medios de comunicación.

### **"Creamos nuestra propia Cultura"**

#### **IV. Ejemplos de Medios de Comunicación conocido por el grupo**

1. Juegos didácticos
2. Boletines y Volantes
3. Periódico Mural
4. Fiches
5. Radio
6. Teatro

#### **V. TAREA**

Cada persona en el grupo va a desarrollar un tipo de comunicación. Lo importante no es el producto final, sino es el proceso y las destrezas necesarias para explicar a su compañeras **que, como, y todos los pasos** Ud. hizo para desarrollar esta actividad.

# Envíanos tus Opiniones.

noticias.....

ALZA TU PROPIA VOZ.....

apóyanos.....

historias .....

humorismo.....

anécdotas.....

INCORPORATE  
SE MUJER.....

relatos.....



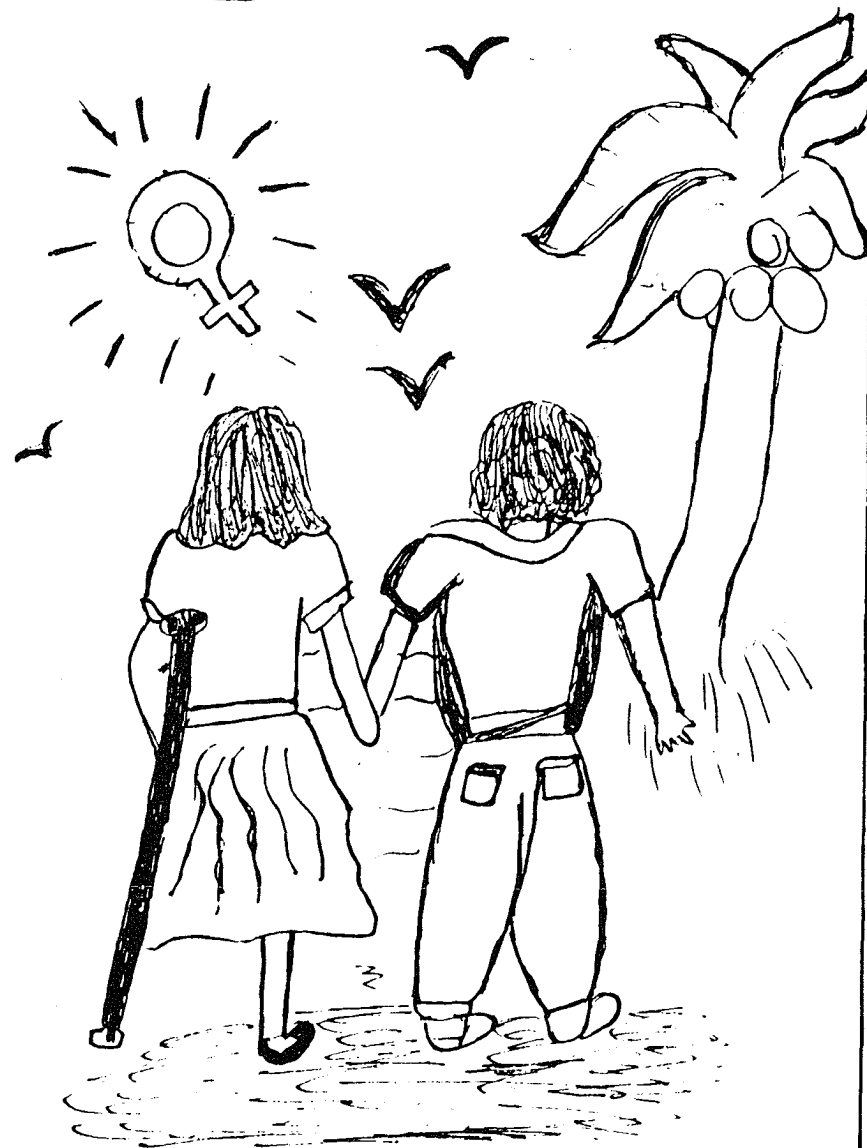
inquietudes.....



testimonios.....

ACOGIPRI de RL  
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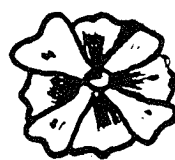
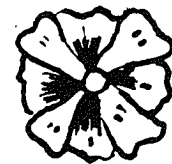
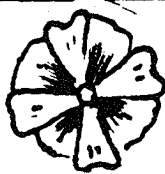
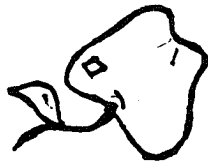
# ENCONTRANDONOS



## EDITORIAL

Como una necesidad inherente a los seres humanos está el agruparse y pronunciarse, de cara a no sólo existir sino, llevar una vida digna e independiente en igualdad de oportunidades.

Así hemos nacido el grupo de mujeres discapacitadas de ACOGIPRI, que ahora nos organizamos por sectores, aunando esfuerzos y criterios a fin de lograr mayor cobertura y llegar cada día a más y más mujeres.



Texto: Mariana Piolara

En los colores : Lidia  
Hernández, Reina  
Isabel Hernández,  
Keny  
Avilés, Tato Reyes

Colaboradores:  
Blanca Sorlo,

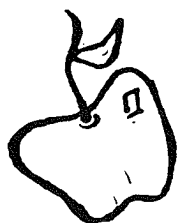
Dibujos : Keny  
Avilés, Tato Reyes



PENSANDO EN TI

Eres mujer..... tus  
 Conoces.....  
 derechos.....  
 Estás.....  
 organizada.....  
 mujeres.....  
 integrarte..... tu  
 Deseas compartir.....  
 historia..... tener  
 Te gusta.....  
 amigos/as.....  
 Escribes poemas, humor  
 o dibujas..... otras  
 Conoces a.....  
 personas.....  
 discapacitadas.....

La idea es hacerte  
 reflexionar acerca de  
 cuán importante somos  
 y exhortarte a que te  
 incorpores de la Mujer  
 Programa de la  
 Discapacitada  
 y ampliar así nuestro  
 pequeño grupo, a fin  
 de que no haya ni una  
 sola mujer que  
 desconozca  
 derechos.  
 ! TE INVITAMOS  
 PARTICIPAR !



ASI ES....



Fue el sábado 3 de  
 abril, llegamos a  
 casa de nuestra amiga  
 "Doña Idalia" con  
 mucho cariño le  
 llamamos así, fuimos  
 Reina, Tere, Keny y  
 Maritza, la pasamos  
 muy agradable, entre  
 conversaciones, un  
 sabroso arroz en  
 leche y risas  
 abordamos tantos  
 temas, que nos hizo  
 falta tiempo para  
 terminar; sin embargo,  
 es una lástima que  
 habiendo enviado  
 tantos telegramas de  
 invitación, las  
 mujeres no asisten,

es como si no les  
 interesara, como que  
 una inmensa nube las  
 habitara....  
 Pero es un buen logro  
 nuestra pequeña  
 reunión, pues  
 decidimos hacer una  
 "boletina" para  
 plasmar nuestra  
 experiencia que como  
 mujeres nos es muy  
 similar, compartir lo  
 aprendido en las  
 capacitaciones y  
 también  
 inquietudes y algunos  
 "PUNTOS" en los que  
 quizás... tú le  
 encuentres...



## RELATO

(Idalia Hernández)



El 5 de mayo de 1973, sufrí un accidente de tránsito el cual me dejó paralizada la mitad de mi cuerpo y en una silla de ruedas para toda mi vida; al principio se me vino el mundo encima, pues pensaba muchas cosas negativas; como por ejemplo, el que yo ya no podría trabajar y muchas cosas más; pero había un hijo por quien yo tenía que vivir para sacarlo adelante hasta donde Dios quisiera, y Dios ha sido tan generoso que después de 20 años he salido adelante, y he vuelto a trabajar, siempre en mi profesión y en la misma empresa para la cual trabajaba en aquel entonces; Dios es maravilloso, pues gracias a El es que estoy relatando ésta historia.

En cierta ocasión me dijeron que si quería trabajar pero, yo definitivamente NO QUERIA, sentía temor en primer lugar de no

aguantar la jornada de trabajo en la silla de ruedas sin destanzar, luego que si podría desempeñar siempre mi trabajo, y por último cómo me sentiría en ese ambiente de muchos trabajadores/as, pensaba que harían sentirme mal por cualquier cosa y por supuesto que sería poco tiempo el que trabajaría, cual sería mi sorpresa QUE TODO FUE LO CONTRARIO, al principio me sentí muy cansada, pero LO AGUANTE Y LO SUPERE; con respecto al trabajo pienso que lo he hecho no con perfección pero sí con dedicación y esmero; por lo demás, mis compañeros/as SON LO MAXIMO conmigo, hablo de todos/as. Respecto a mis jefes no tengo problemas y espero no tenerlos nunca.



## AUTOBIOGRAFIA

Mi nombre es Reina Isabel Hernández, nací en un lindo y humilde hogar en el cual fui muy feliz, hasta que un día amanecí enferma, me llevaron al hospital donde me atendieron durante algún tiempo y a causa de una inyección mal aplicada que me originó una discapacidad en la pierna derecha, mi vida cambió totalmente. Pensaba que no era útil para la sociedad y mi familia, sentía que el mundo se me venía encima, fue entonces que conocí a un ser maravilloso que me hizo sentir, sentirme bien, me ayudó dándome valor para seguir en la vida y salir adelante juntos con mi hija. Ahora sé que Dios está conmigo, brindándome felicidad, capacidad de trabajar; me siento muy bien, y trato de ser feliz junto a mi esposo, mi hija, mi familia y amigas/os.





## INACCESIBILIDAD EN EL TRANSPORTE

(Keny Avilés)



Muchas veces nos encontramos con personas discapacitadas, que se enfrentan al terrible problema de no poder subir a un bus o microbus, debido a que éstos no ofrecen condiciones de seguridad apropiadas solo están hechos para las personas "normales", a quienes no se les dificulta subir grandes gradas o que no les molesta ir topando sus pies con el otro asiento, ya que los pueden doblar fácilmente.

Este es un problema que requiere de una pronta atención y desgraciadamente no hay una institución encargada de solucionarlo.



El diseño de los medios de transporte es inapropiado, porque no se ajusta a las necesidades de todas las personas: gradas demasiado altas, puertas estrechas, asientos muy pegados, espacios muy reducidos.

Los diseños deberían ser modernizados, ajustándose a las diferentes necesidades tanto de las personas discapacitadas, como de la población en general.

Con este entorno, esperamos motivarte a tomar conciencia de la inmensa problemática y buscar juntos/as SOLUCIONES idóneas que coadyuven a la plena integración socio-económica de las personas con discapacidad.

## EL NOVIAZGO



Este es un tema lleno de muchas polémicas, puesto que en una sociedad como la nuestra ver a una persona con discapacidad es de "admirarse", mas aún si está acompañada por una persona "normal" y ¡son novios!, es algo catalogado como "fuera de lo normal".

Es muy bonito ver parejas de novios paseando por las calles, cines, universidades, etc.; pero, cuando alguno o los dos tienen una discapacidad, no logramos explicarnos el por qué, y nos enmarcamos en muchos tabúes, en falsas expectativas.

No obstante, y gracias al ahinco con que se ha trabajado el Programa de la Mujer con Discapacidad se ha logrado borrar muchos prejuicios respecto a las relaciones de pareja, relaciones sexuales, accesibilidad al

trabajo, a los medios de educación y diversión, pero hace falta mucho, ...haces falta tú

Cimentando nuestros objetivos y lucha en la necesidad inherente de los "seres humanos" de dar y recibir amor, de compartir y vivir plenamente. Reconociendo además, que las mujeres discapacitadas estamos en mayor desventaja que los hombres, debido al sistema patriarcal en que existimos, que considera a la mujer "enfermera del Hogar", cuando la vida es otra cosa, la vida es vivir, tener capacidad de comprender, tener sensibilidad humana, saber aceptarla tal cual es. Las limitaciones y las barreras sólo están en nuestras mentes; todas/os tenemos la capacidad de brindar algo tan lindo como es EL AMOR.



# CONFESION (Maritza Melara C.)



No sé cómo  
correr, pero cada  
camino tiene un  
objetivo,  
cada paso es un  
eslabón vital  
no sabré bailar Rock  
and Roll, ni Jazz, ni  
Punta.....

pero,  
disfruto la música  
intensamente.

No sé caminar sola a  
la orilla del  
mar, pero.....

el movimiento de las  
olas me inspira, las  
puestas del sol me  
emocionan  
la inmensidad de el  
cielo y el agua... me  
estremecen

Sentarme sobre la  
arena, ver las  
gaviotas, recibir el  
sol, escuchar las  
quejas de el  
silencio... y reír...  
y llorar..... me dan  
la

seguridad que tengo  
vida... y la  
vivo.....

Sonreírle a algún  
transeúnte, tomar un  
lápiz, decir tu

nombre, sentir,  
perderme en tu  
mirada, descubrirme  
entre la timidez,  
inclinar la frente,  
oír tu voz.

! Que pequeña y que  
grande soy!

Hago mía la Luna  
cuando sueño  
pero el mañana me da  
miedo.....

Me gusta robar  
miradas, más me  
dolería perder la  
tuya

adoro a los  
infantes.....

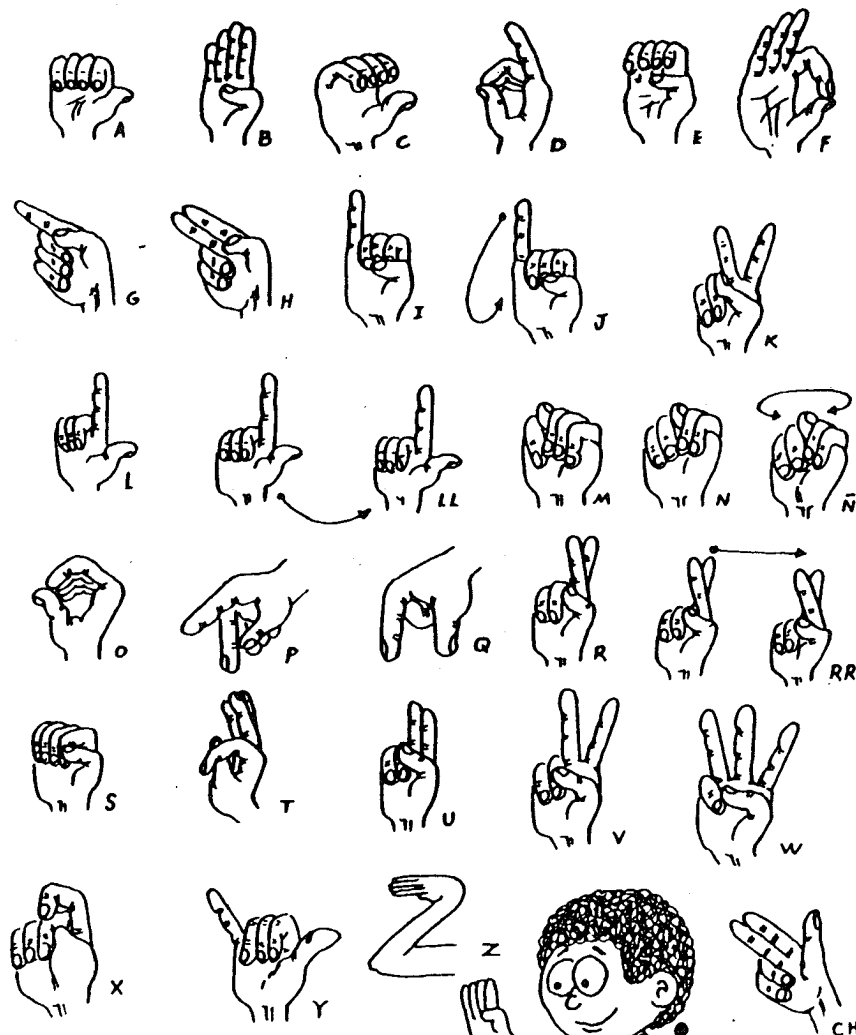
sus risas, sus  
juegos, curiosidades,  
travesuras y  
aciertos....

Me gustaría poder  
decir alguna vez:  
haber acariciado a mi  
hijo, a mi amigo...  
Haber compartido algo  
más que una bella  
emoción

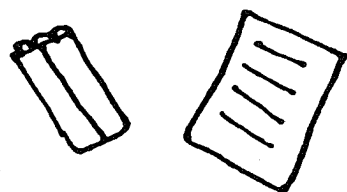
No obstante,  
sé que he amado, he  
sentido, he pensado,  
he vivido

todo  
todo cuanto he podido  
y  
más aún...

amo y  
pienso..... todav  
ía.



APRENDE EL LENGUAJE DE SEÑAS.  
PRIMER EL ABECEDARIO.



de la Mujer de ACOGIPRI, quienes fueron de observadoras y además, para compartir sus experiencias de lo que fue en El Salvador esta misma actividad con las mujeres discapacitadas de nuestra organización.

Nos complace comunicarles que de ahora en adelante podremos llegar con nuestras boletinas a más compañeras/os de nuestra América Latina!! Hemos recibido sugerencias y comentarios para éstas, esperamos que puedan ser mejoradas para las posteriores ediciones. Hemos hecho siete boletinas incluida ésta en el transcurso del año, cuyos nombres son "Con tu voz", "Encontrándonos" y "Siempre Mujer" dirigidas por Ruth Rodríguez, Maritza Melara y Eileen Girón. Quienes deseen obtenerlas pueden llamarnos y nosotras se las enviamos.

Continuamos trabajando en coordinación con mujeres discapacitadas de Fraternidad Cristiana (Guatemala) en la organización de su primer taller sobre Teoría del Género que se realizó el 25 y 26 de septiembre. Hubo la participación de 33 guatemaltecas y Blanca Dina Sorto y Ruth Eugenia Avilés, salvadoreñas miembros activos del Programa

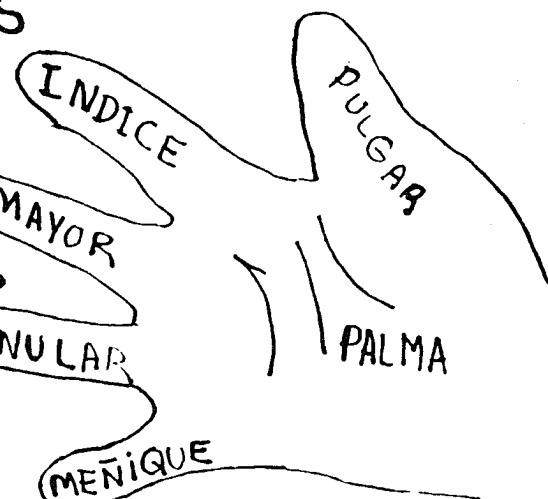
# CON TU VOZ

## HABLEMOS

Con

## NUESTRAS

## manos





# PORTADA

A partir de este número les presentaremos una recopilación del curso del Lenguaje de Signos impartido en el Centro de Audición y Lenguaje "Tomás Regalado González" por James Scott, Freeman King y Fátima Slonik, entre los años de 1984 a 1988 que tan precisamente logró imprimir doña Teresa Aguirre de Sarmiento en su libro titulado: "El Signo de la Felicidad". Seguramente será de mucha utilidad para que todas las personas nos comuniquemos con las personas sordas, superando las limitaciones que ellos y ellas experimentan.

"Solo viendo una experiencia similar, se puede comprender la magnitud del problema", Teresa Aguirre de Sarmiento.

Boletina del Programa de la Mujer.  
Asociación Cooperativa del Grupo Independiente Pro Rehabilitación Integral de R.L.

Coordinadora General:  
Ruth Rodríguez.

Colaboradoras:  
Maritza Melara  
Teresa Aguirre de Sarmiento  
Ana Josefa Andrade

Año 1. No. 4.

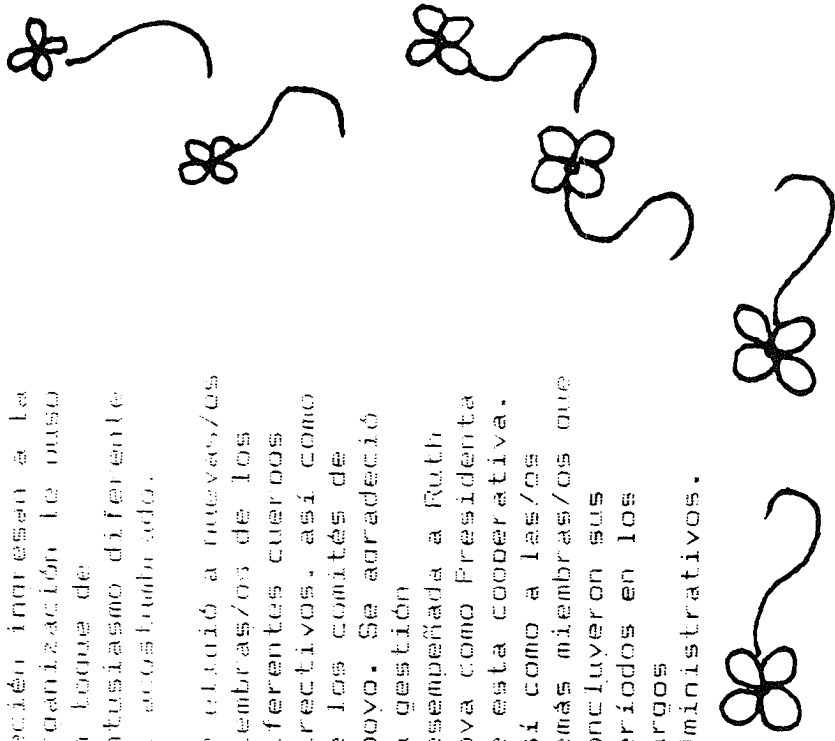
Octubre de 1993.  
**ACOGIPRI**  
Dirección: Calle Gabriela Mistral, Pje. 11 #553. Col. Centro América. San Salvador. El Salvador. Tel. 26 78 54, 26 43 47. Fax 26 92 69.

# EDITORIAL

El 11 de septiembre Sabemos que el camino del presente se llevó por recorrer es a cabo la Asamblea largo, pero asumimos General de socios/as el compromiso con de esta cooperativa mucha responsabilidad habiendo contado con para demostrarnos que una concurrencia podemos contribuir al superior a años fortalecimiento de anteriores.

La asistencia de muchas compañeras que recién ingresen a la organización le puso un toque de entusiasmo diferente al acostumbrado.

Se otorgó a nuevas/os miembras/os de los diferentes cuerpos directivos, así como de los comités de apoyo. Se agradeció la gestión desempeñada a Ruth Nova como Presidenta de esta cooperativa, así como a las/os demás miembras/os que concluyeron sus períodos en los cargos administrativos.



# COMENTANDO



## EL MUNDO DEL MINUSVALIDO/A

Por Marilza Melara

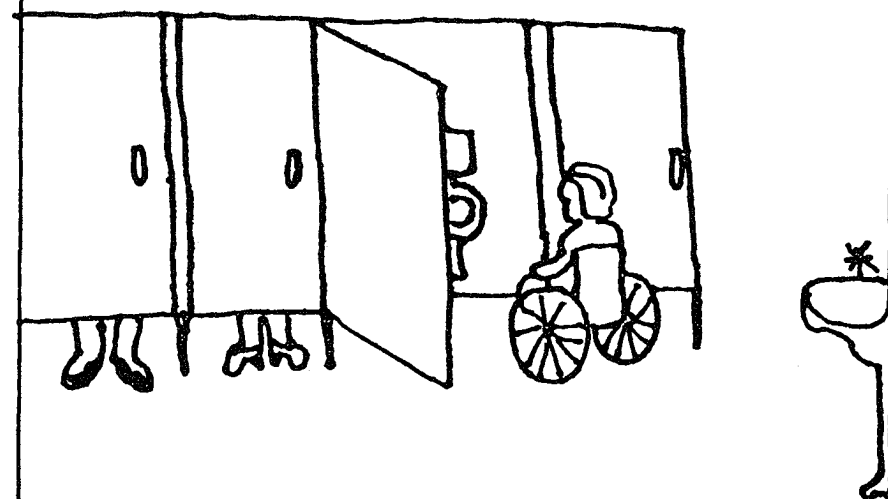
Para muchas personas resulta increíble ver a personas con algún tipo de discapacidad física asistiendo al cine, colegio, iglesia, concierto, restaurante, etc.; otras lo ven como "un sacrificio" y nos tildan de "pobrecillo/a", y para otras resulta un "insulto u ofensa" a la sociedad.

Sin embargo, nosotras las personas con discapacidad, tenemos iguales derechos como todo ser humano a vivir plenamente, a procurarnos la satisfacción espiritual que le

proporcionan: una profesión, un hogar, una buena educación, una diversión sana, una sonrisa desconocida, una mano amiga, una palabra oportuna...

Es maravilloso ver a alguien por la calle en silla de ruedas, con muletas, con aparatos ortopédicos, pronunciándose en pro de sus derechos; somos parte de la sociedad. Los discapacitados no merecemos un club de beneficencia, ni obras de caridad, ni críticas paternalistas, ni mucho menos limosna. Merecemos una oportunidad, de ser,

Demandamos pues, de esta sociedad leves riñidas consecuentes



Por Ruth Rodríguez

Cuando realizamos una actividad fuera de nuestras oficinas, enfrentamos serias dificultades porque la mayoría de las construcciones o locales presentan para nosotras/os barreras arquitectónicas difíciles de superar. Encontramos escaleras, gradas (sin pasamanos), pasillos estrechos y servicios sanitarios nada accesibles para personas que utilizan silla de ruedas.

Recientemente tuvimos una experiencia singular, inusual pero muy especial para nosotras/os.

Andábamos buscando un local para realizar una actividad. Finalmente encontramos la sala de té Shaddai, cuya propietaria escuchó las dificultades que teníamos debido a que las personas muchas de ellas en silla de ruedas, por lo que mandó a ampliar la entrada a uno de los servicios sanitarios aprovechando que

estaban remodelando

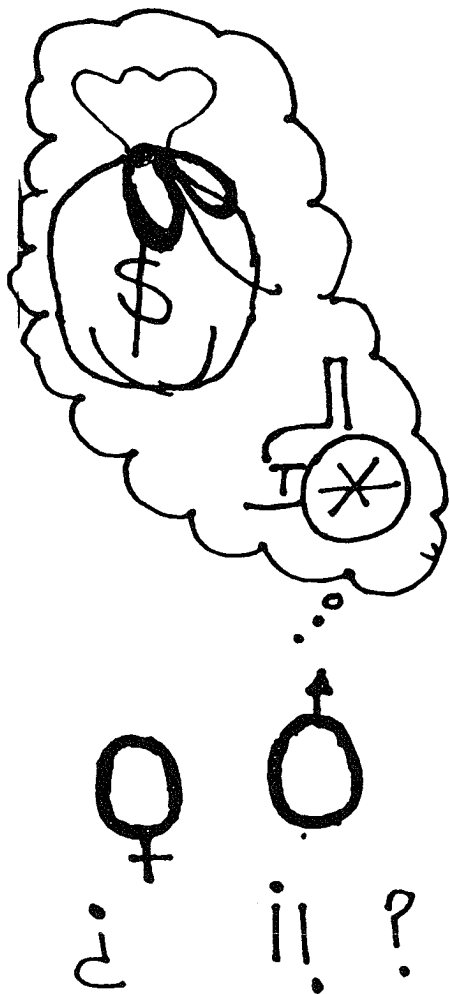
Agradecemos públicamente a la administración de Shaddai este gesto.

Creemos que los/as arquitectos/as deben pensar en ello antes de comenzar a construir, sólo bastan unos centímetros más para que personas que usan silla de ruedas puedan acceder a estos servicios igual que las demás personas.

Pero tal parece que nos ignoran. Necesitamos puertas más anchas en todo lugar, inclusive en las viviendas. Cuando decidimos ir a una actividad de muchas horas, tenemos que aguantar la micción el tiempo que sea necesario, a sabiendas de que esto nos puede causar infección en las vías urinarias.

Señores/as que diseñan las construcciones, nos preguntamos: ¿Les importará ésto?, o sólo miran cuánto

obtendrán de ganancias. Tal parece que así es... ¿O será sólo falta de educación de información? o de CONCIENCIA SOCIAL.

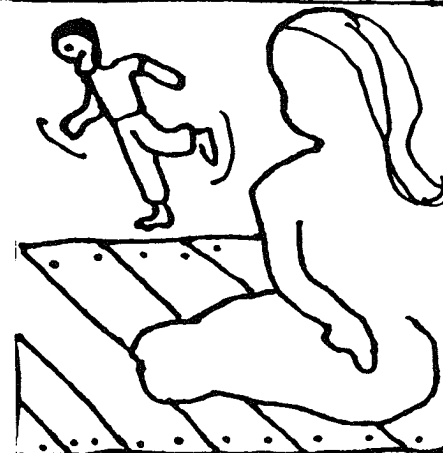


## HISTORIA DE VIDA

Por Ana Josefa Andrade

Mis primeros recuerdos de infancia se remontan a los cinco años de edad. Tirada en el duro suelo y cantando alegremente en aquella habitación rústica del pueblo de San Sebastián, San Vicente. Salía gateando hasta la calle a esta edad. Cuando fue el tiempo de ir a la escuela vi la diferencia entre los/as demás niños/as que asistían a ésta, yo deseaba ir también pero no podía caminar, me sentía muy triste de no poder hacerlo.

Mi familia, de bajos recursos la componíamos mi madre, mi hermano y yo. Ella tenía que ir a trabajar a una fábrica de hilados y tejidos y por esto casi no nos atendía. Entre mi hermano y yo manteníamos limpio y



ordenado el cuarto donde vivíamos.

A los diez de edad, supe que existía un centro especial para personas con discapacidad, para ingresar era necesario una referencia médica y como yo no me enfermaba no la tenía. Tuve la referencia médica después de todo. Ingresé a este centro y gracias al apoyo que allí me dieron pude estudiar hasta noveno grado, aparte de aprender otras cosas importantes para mi vida.

Con el paso de los años mi madre murió, mi hermano se casó y yo me pregunté qué iba a ser con mi vida. Soy una persona cuadrapléjica.

Me fui ilegal a E.U. pasé lo mismo que les pasa a los/as ilegales, aquantar hambre, sueño, lluvias, falta de dinero, pasar en prisión, etc. Estuve 6 años allá. Era difícil estar ilegal y discapacitada. Gané dinero cuidando un niño para poder regresar a El Salvador.

De nuevo reingresé al centro especial que estaba remodelado, tenía ahora taller productivo al cual me incorporé. Mi trabajo es de supervisora de una parte de este taller donde se hacen cojines, cubrecamas, bolsas escolares, delantales, etc.

Mi consejo a personas con problemas de parálisis es que no se desesperen ni piensen lo peor, tenemos que luchar para seguir adelante igual que todo el mundo.



# LENGUAJE DE SIGNOS

## POSICIONES DE LAS MANOS



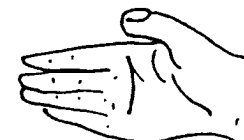
EN 5



PALMA HACIA ABAJO



AHUECADA



DE CANTO

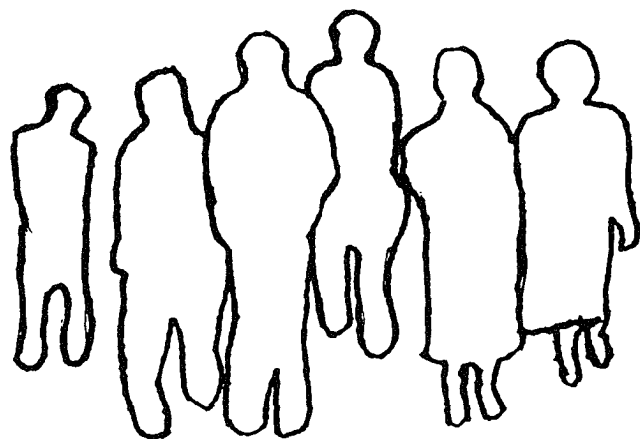


DOBLADA



ALARGADA

# ACTIVIDADES



## BECAS CAPS/USAID

Del 26 de mayo al 6 de julio/93. nuestras socias Ruth Rodríguez y Rosario Cáceres tuvieron la oportunidad de entrenarse en Rehabilitación Profesional como parte del Programa de Becas CAPS que USAID otorga en los Estados Unidos.

La capacitación consistió. además en

conocer la filosofía de Vida Independiente para las personas con limitaciones físicas, sensoriales y mentales.

Al finalizar el curso se conformó la coalición Salvadoreños/as Unidos/as para la Integración del Discapacitado. integrada por miembros/os que recibieron el entrenamiento a fin

de poner en práctica lo aprendido con el apoyo mutuo. Dicho entrenamiento estuvo a cargo del Instituto Mundial de Discapacidad situado en Oakland. California. E.U.

## CONFERENCIA PEOPLE FIRST

Los socios Carlos Sandoval y Edoardo Molina estuvieron presentes en la Tercera Conferencia Internacional "Una celebración de Historias" del movimiento People First. Se llevó a cabo en Toronto. Canadá a finales de junio. Ambos tuvieron una participación muy buena.

## ENCUENTRO DE MOBILITY INT'L

La compañera Maritza Melara participó en el Primer Encuentro Eurolatinoamericano realizado en Oaxtepec. México en el mes junio. Dicho Encuentro fue promovido por Mobility International de Inolaterra.

## EXPOSICION DE FOTOGRAFIAS

Recientemente. esta organización presentó. en la exposición "Fotografías vistas por mujeres". una de serie de fotografías alusivas a las actividades que en el transcurso de los años 1990-93 ha venido desarrollando el Programa de la Mujer. Esta actividad fue promovida por la Oficina de la Mujer (CONCULTURA) y se llevó a cabo del 20 al 27 de septiembre/93. en el lobby del Teatro Nacional.

## TALLERES LITERARIOS

Finalizaron los talleres literarios que el Área de Educación y Desarrollo Cultural del Instituto de Estudios de la Mujer "Norma Virginia Quirola de Herrera" (CEMUJER) venía impartiendo a un numeroso grupo de mujeres que han demostrado el interés por esta rama de las letras.

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